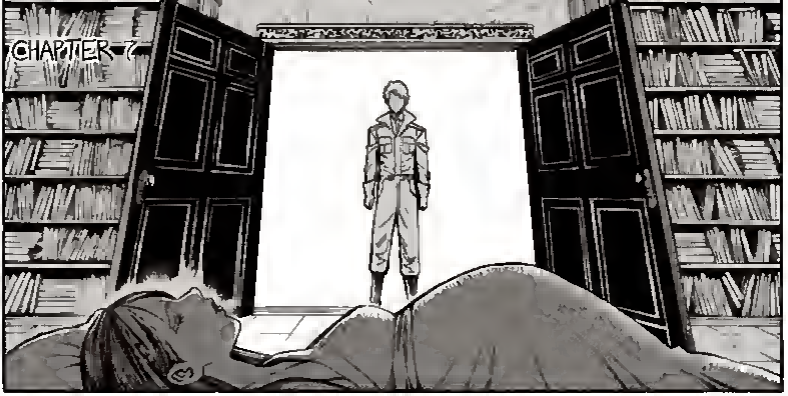
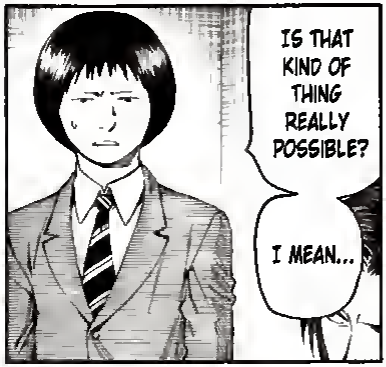


WARNING This chapter is NSFW.

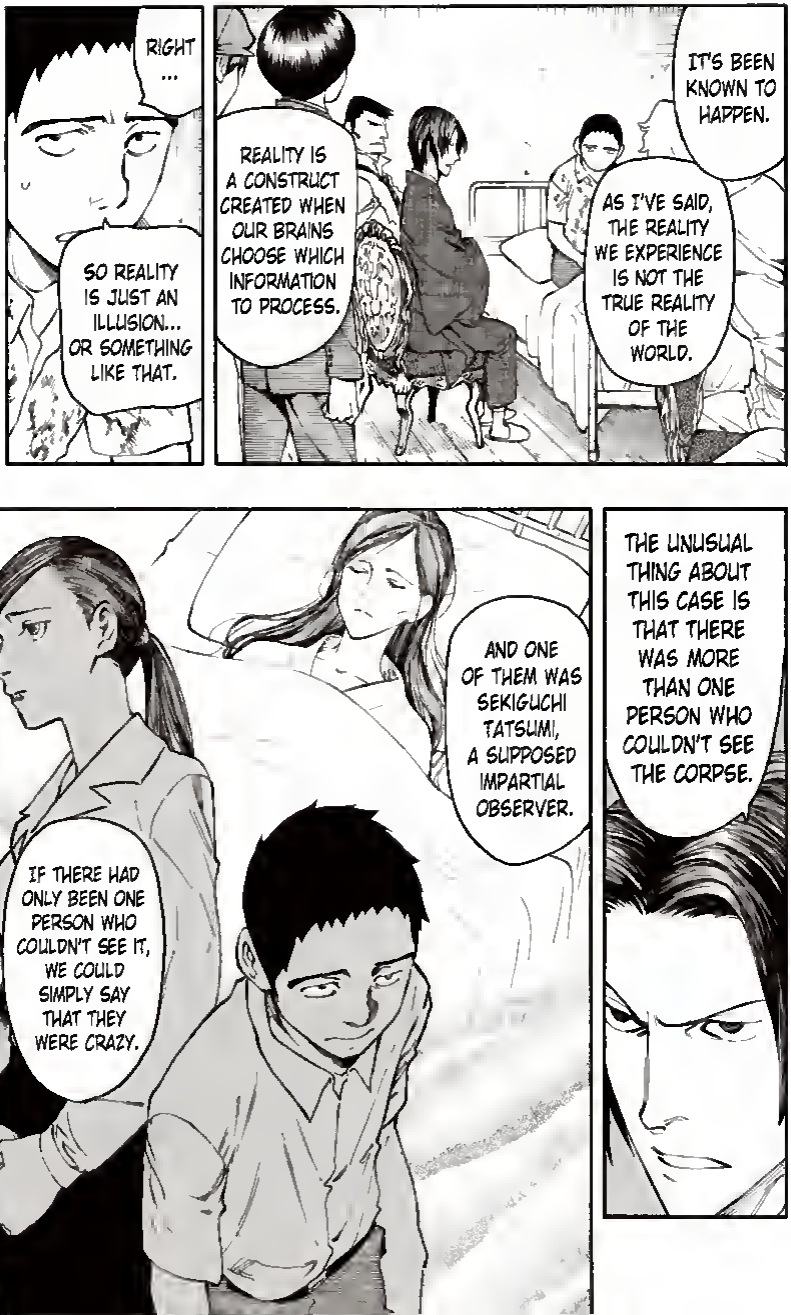
CHAPTER 7
悪魔
呪の家
殺

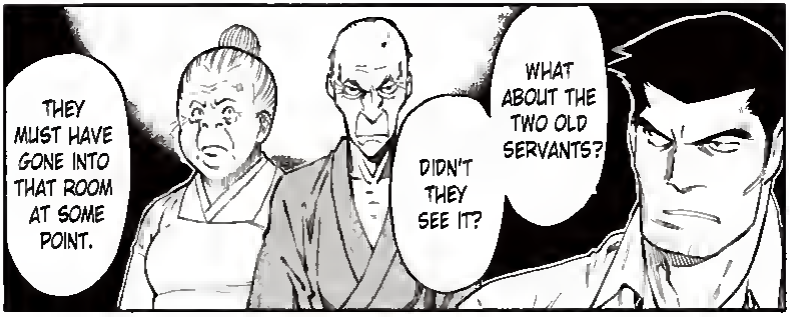
FUJIMAKI-SEMPAI'S CORPSE WAS RIGHT THERE, AND I COULDN'T SEE IT...
IT WAS LIKE I JUST COULDN'T SEE IT...

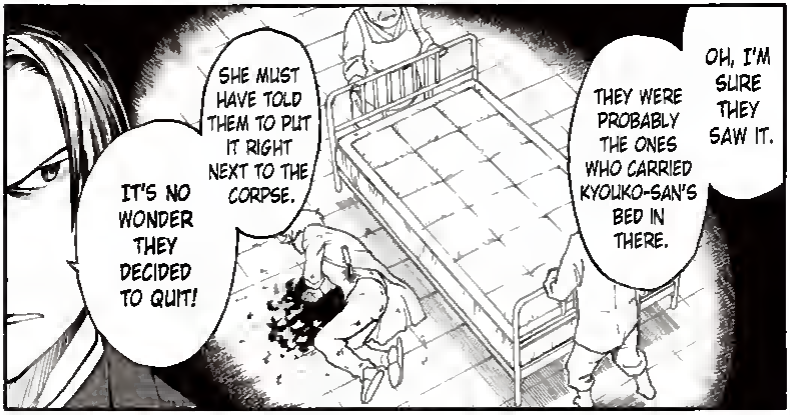
I really couldn't see it...

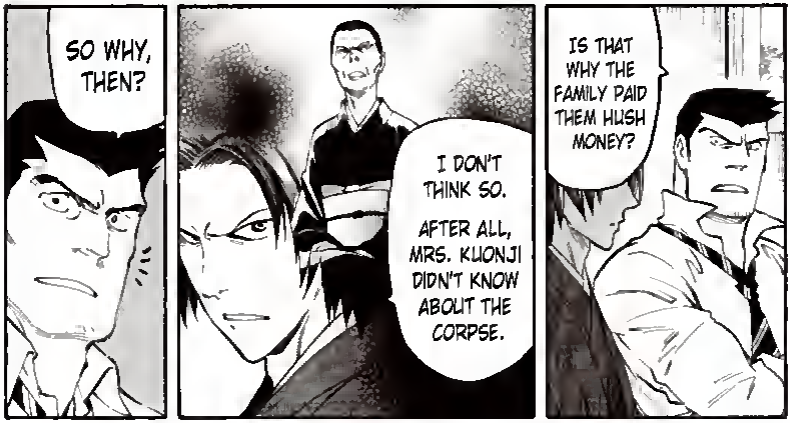

IS THAT KIND OF THING REALLY POSSIBLE?
I MEAN...

ENO-KIZU-SAN!
ENO-KIZU-SAN!
ENO-KIZU-SAN!!
That's right!
After I saw what was behind that door, I was in such a state of shock that I couldn't even hear A-chan calling to me.
And so I realized that maybe it was possible for you to look at something but not see it at all!

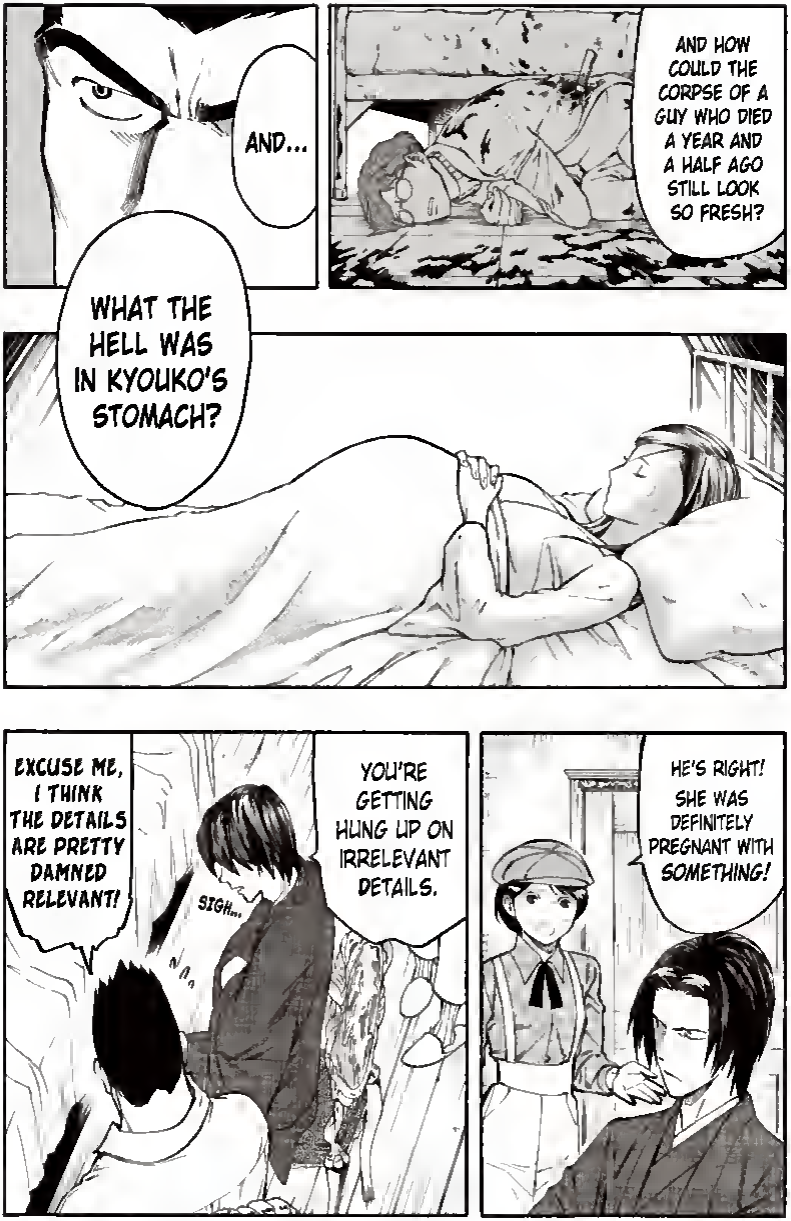

RIGHT ...
SO REALITY IS JUST AN ILLUSION... OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
REALITY IS A CONSTRUCT CREATED WHEN OUR BRAINS CHOOSE WHICH INFORMATION TO PROCESS.
AS I'VE SAID, THE REALITY WE EXPERIENCE IS NOT THE TRUE REALITY OF THE WORLD.
IT'S BEEN KNOWN TO HAPPEN.
IF THERE HAD ONLY BEEN ONE PERSON WHO COULDN'T SEE IT, WE COULD SIMPLY SAY THAT THEY WERE CRAZY.
AND ONE OF THEM WAS SEKIGUCHI TATSUMI, A SUPPOSED IMPARTIAL OBSERVER.
THE UNUSUAL THING ABOUT THIS CASE IS THAT THERE WAS MORE THAN ONE PERSON WHO COULDN'T SEE THE CORPSE.


THEY MUST HAVE GONE INTO THAT ROOM AT SOME POINT.
DIDN'T THEY SEE IT?
WHAT ABOUT THE TWO OLD SERVANTS?

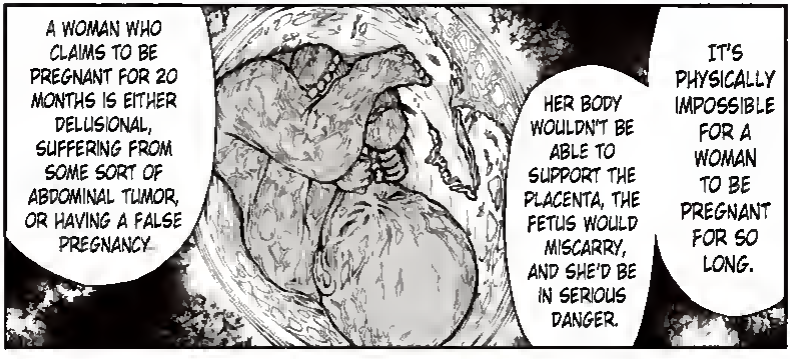

IT'S NO WONDER THEY DECIDED TO QUIT!
SHE MUST HAVE TOLD THEM TO PUT IT RIGHT NEXT TO THE CORPSE.
THEY WERE PROBABLY THE ONES WHO CARRIED KYOUKO-SAN'S BED IN THERE.
OH, I'M SURE THEY SAW IT.

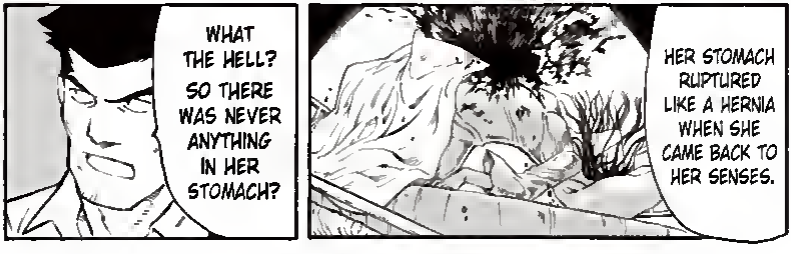

SO WHY, THEN?
I DON'T THINK SO.
AFTER ALL, MRS. KUONJI DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE CORPSE.
IS THAT WHY THE FAMILY PAID THEM HUSH MONEY?

SO THAT MEANS THAT THE HUSH MONEY MUST HAVE BEEN FOR SOMETHING ELSE...
I SUSPECT THAT THE OLD COUPLE WOULD HAVE STAYED QUIET OUT OF LOYALTY TO THE KUONJI FAMILY.
.....
WHY DON'T YOU ASK THEM YOURSELF?
LIKE THE MISSING BABIES?
EVEN IF THE TWO GIRLS WERE IN DEEP DENIAL, WHY COULDN'T THIS IDIOT SEE THE CORPSE?
HMPH
I STILL DON'T BELIEVE IT.


AND...
AND HOW COULD THE CORPSE OF A GUY WHO DIED A YEAR AND A HALF AGO STILL LOOK SO FRESH?
WHAT THE HELL WAS IN KYOUKO'S STOMACH?
EXCUSE ME, I THINK THE DETAILS ARE PRETTY DAMNED RELEVANT!
SIGH...
NO.
YOU'RE GETTING HUNG UP ON IRRELEVANT DETAILS.
HE'S RIGHT! SHE WAS DEFINITELY PREGNANT WITH SOMETHING!

A FALSE PREGNANCY ...!?
IT WAS A FALSE PREGNANCY.


A WOMAN WHO CLAIMS TO BE PREGNANT FOR 20 MONTHS IS EITHER DELUSIONAL, SUFFERING FROM SOME SORT OF ABDOMINAL TUMOR, OR HAVING A FALSE PREGNANCY.
HER BODY WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO SUPPORT THE PLACENTA, THE FETUS WOULD MISCARRY, AND SHE'D BE IN SERIOUS DANGER.
IT'S PHYSICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR A WOMAN TO BE PREGNANT FOR SO LONG.


WHAT THE HELL?
SO THERE WAS NEVER ANYTHING IN HER STOMACH?
HER STOMACH RUPTURED LIKE A HERNIA WHEN SHE CAME BACK TO HER SENSES.

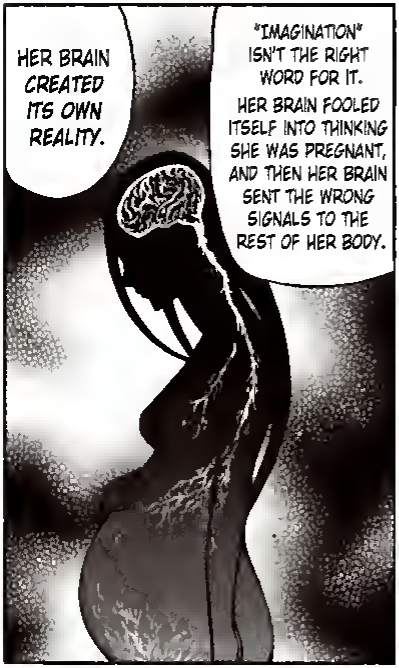
WHEN I TOLD YOU ABOUT THE RUMOR... YOU ALREADY KNEW THAT IT WAS A FALSE PREGNANCY?
Kyougokudou is being unusually poetic.
AND FUJIMAKI'S UNREALIZED DREAMS OF FATHERHOOD.
ONLY A MOTHER'S HOPES AND REGRETS.
SO THAT'S WHY YOU ASKED IF THE BABY HAD BEEN TALKING TO HER?
DOES THE CHILD EVER SPEAK TO YOU FROM INSIDE YOUR BELLY?
HOWEVER, I WASN'T SURE IF SHE WAS EXPERIENCING A FALSE PREGNANCY OR SOME SORT OF DELUSION.
I HAD MY SUSPICIONS.
BASICALLY, THE BRAIN CAUSES THE BODY TO REACT AS IF IT'S A REAL PREGNANCY.
FALSE PREGNANCY IS A REAL MEDICAL CONDITION...
THE PATIENT BELIEVES THAT SHE'S PREGNANT, SO HER BODY STARTS PRODUCING PREGNANCY HORMONES.
OI, SEKIGUCHI! WHAT THE HELL IS HE TALKING ABOUT!?

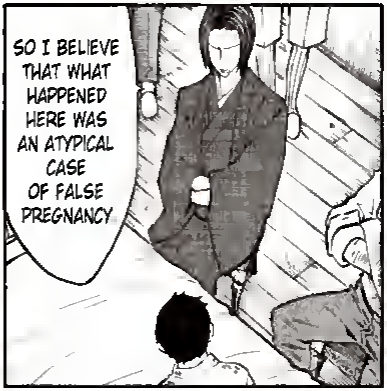
WELL, IN A DELUSION, SHE MIGHT THINK SHE'S PREGNANT WITH A REINCARNATED RELIGIOUS FIGURE, OR THE SPIRIT OF AN ANCESTOR.
OR EVEN THE GHOST OF ANOTHER CHILD WHO DIED.
BUT IN A PREGNANCY DELUSION, THE PATIENT BELIEVES THAT HER BODY HAS BEEN POSSESSED.
FROM A MEDICAL PERSPECTIVE, IT'S VERY SIMILAR...
SOUNDS LIKE THE SAME THING TO ME!
SHE BELIEVES THAT HER BODY IS POSSESSED BY SOME OUTSIDE FORCE...
IT'S A SERIOUS MENTAL CONDITION.
AND THIS FAMILY DOES HAVE A HISTORY OF POSSESSION ..
SHE MAY EVEN BELIEVE THAT IT'S A VIRGIN BIRTH!
THE SYMPTOMS ARE SIMILAR TO A FALSE PREGNANCY, BUT THERE ARE SOME KEY DIFFERENCES.
NAMELY, THE WOMAN WILL OFTEN BELIEVE THAT THE BABY IS SPEAKING TO HER OR GIVING HER ORDERS.
YOU MEAN THE OSHOBO LEGEND?

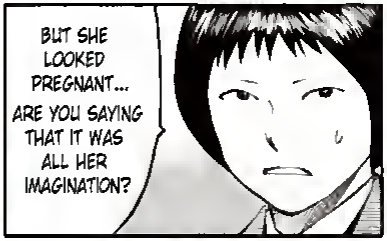
I SUSPECTED THAT SHE WAS DELUSIONAL WHEN I REALIZED THAT SHE AND FUJIMAKI HAD LIKELY NEVER CONSUMMATED THEIR MARRIAGE.
WOMEN WHO HAVE FALSE PREGNANCIES ARE USUALLY SEXUALLY ACTIVE.

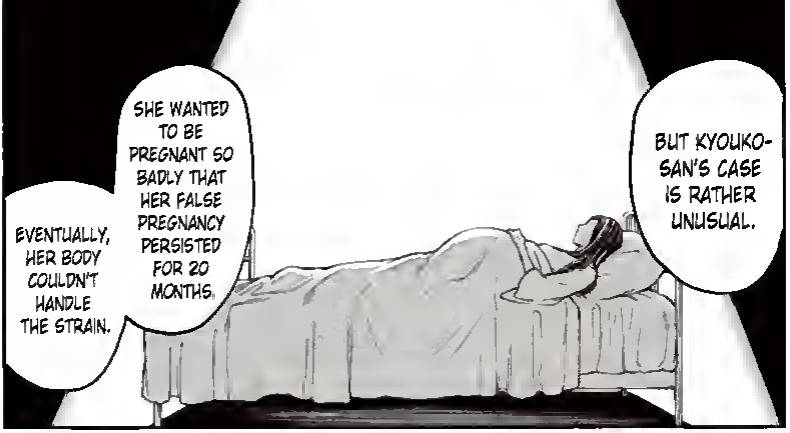
BUT WHEN I SPOKE TO HER, SHE DIDN'T SEEM DELUSIONAL.
.....

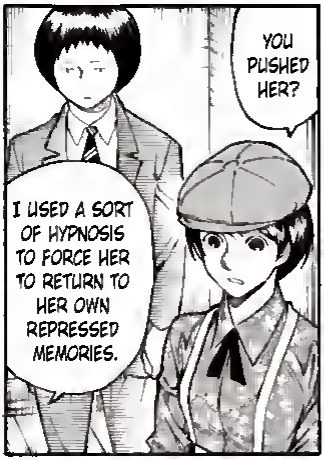
WAIT, WHAT!?
THEY NEVER HAD SEX?


HER BRAIN CREATED ITS OWN REALITY.
"IMAGINATION" ISN'T THE RIGHT WORD FOR IT.
HER BRAIN FOOLED ITSELF INTO THINKING SHE WAS PREGNANT, AND THEN HER BRAIN SENT THE WRONG SIGNALS TO THE REST OF HER BODY.

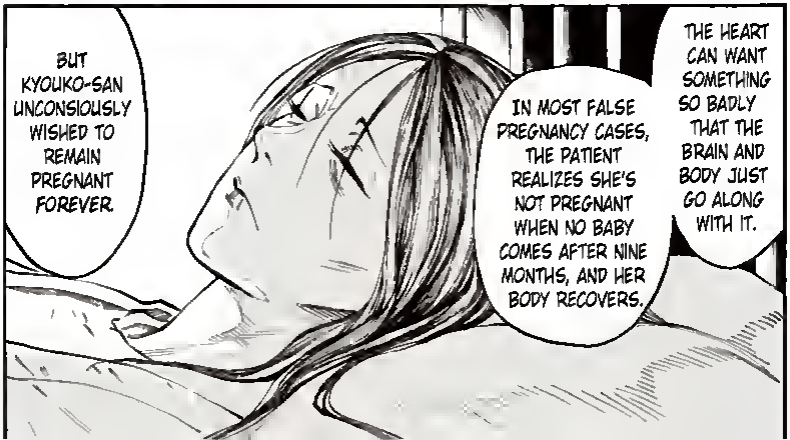

SO I BELIEVE THAT WHAT HAPPENED HERE WAS AN ATYPICAL CASE OF FALSE PREGNANCY


BUT SHE LOOKED PREGNANT...
ARE YOU SAYING THAT IT WAS ALL HER IMAGINATION?

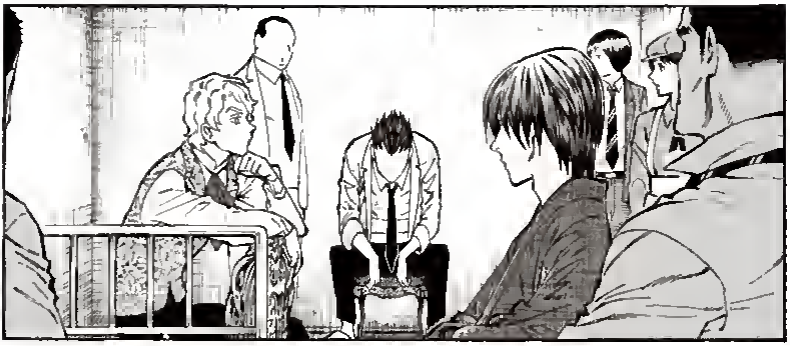

BUT KYOUKO-SAN'S CASE IS RATHER UNUSUAL.
SHE WANTED TO BE PREGNANT SO BADLY THAT HER FALSE PREGNANCY PERSISTED FOR 20 MONTHS.
EVENTUALLY, HER BODY COULDN'T HANDLE THE STRAIN.

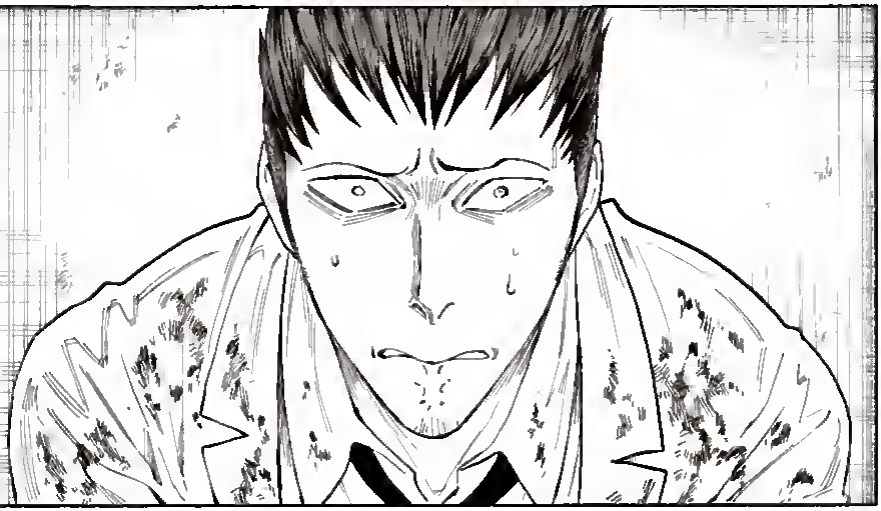

YOU PUSHED HER?
I USED A SORT OF HYPNOSIS TO FORCE HER TO RETURN TO HER OWN REPRESSED MEMORIES.

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT SHE WAS IN SUCH A FRAGILE STATE... I SHOULDN'T HAVE PUSHED HER SO HARD.
IT'S A GOOD THING WE BROUGHT A MEDICAL TEAM.

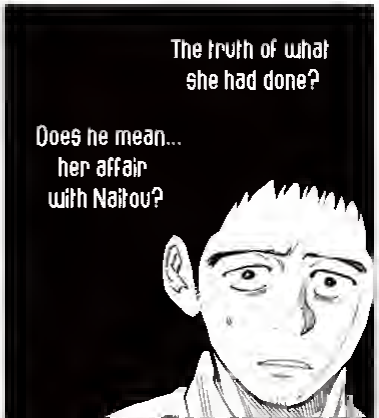

BUT KYOUKO-SAN UNCONSIOUSLY WISHED TO REMAIN PREGNANT FOREVER.
IN MOST FALSE PREGNANCY CASES, THE PATIENT REALIZES SHE'S NOT PREGNANT WHEN NO BABY COMES AFTER NINE MONTHS, AND HER BODY RECOVERS.
THE HEART CAN WANT SOMETHING SO BADLY THAT THE BRAIN AND BODY JUST GO ALONG WITH IT.

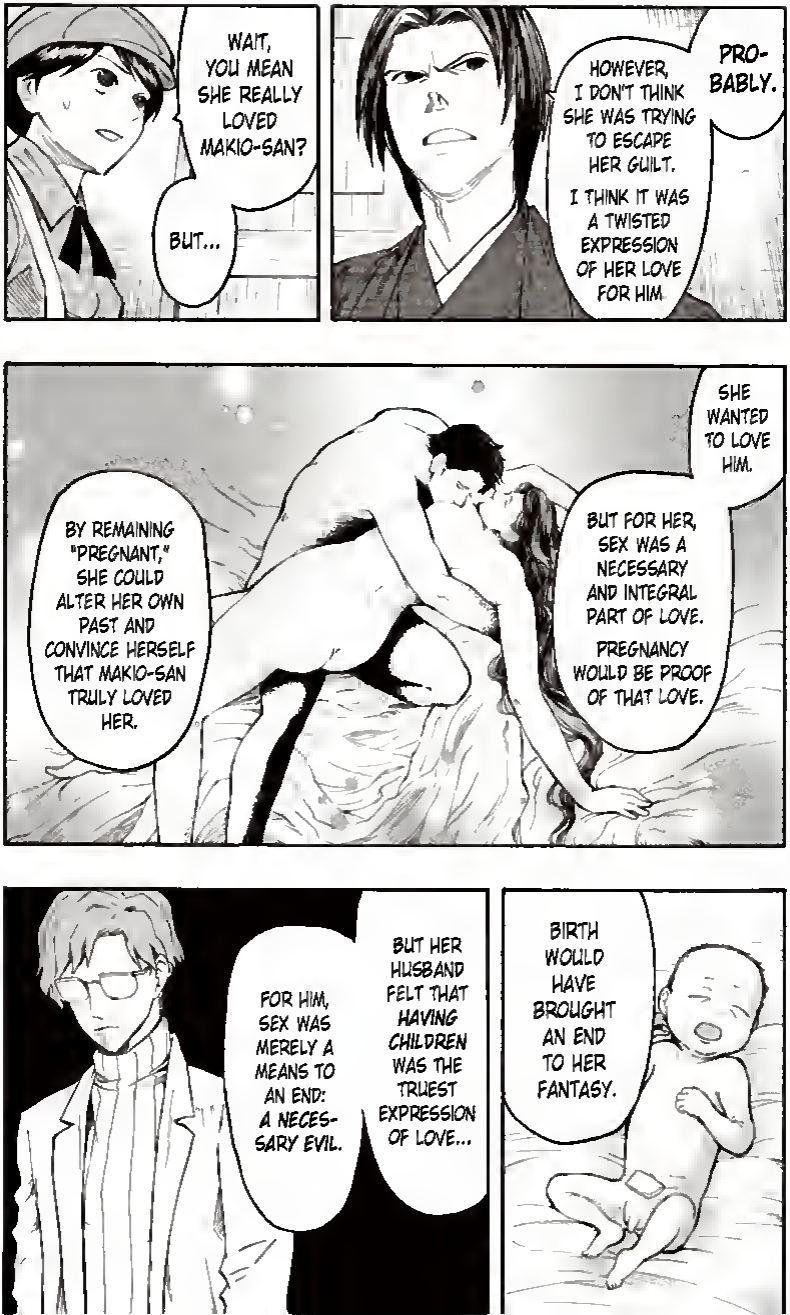
YOU MEAN THE DAY THAT MAKIO DISAPPEARED? NO... THE DAY HE WAS MURDERED?
BEFORE THAT.
I THEORISED THAT HER CONDITION HAD BEEN BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE EVENTS THAT OCCURRED THAT DAY..
I HAD TO TAKE HER BACK TO THAT MOMENT, SO SHE COULD ACCEPT THE TRUTH.
WOULDN'T SHE WANT TO GET IT OVER WITH AND HAVE A BABY?
WAIT A MINUTE... WHY WOULD SHE WANT TO STAY PREGNANT FOREVER?
I BELIEVE THAT SHE WANTED TO BE PREGNANT SO SHE WOULDN'T HAVE TO ACKNOWLEGE THE TRUTH OF WHAT SHE HAD DONE
NOT NECES-SARILY.





ARE YOU SAYING THAT SHE KILLED HER HUSBAND?

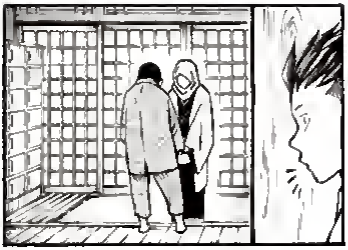

The truth of what she had done?
Does he mean... her affair with Naitou?

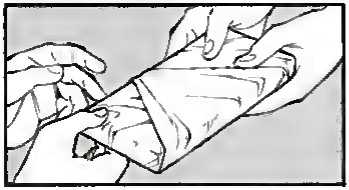

WAIT, YOU MEAN SHE REALLY LOVED MAKIO-SAN?
BUT...
PRO-BABLY.
HOWEVER, I DON'T THINK SHE WAS TRYING TO ESCAPE HER GUILT.
I THINK IT WAS A TWISTED EXPRESSION OF HER LOVE FOR HIM.
SHE WANTED TO LOVE HIM.
BUT FOR HER, SEX WAS A NECESSARY AND INTEGRAL PART OF LOVE.
PREGNANCY WOULD BE PROOF OF THAT LOVE.
BY REMAINING "PREGNANT," SHE COULD ALTER HER OWN PAST AND CONVINCE HERSELF THAT MAKIO-SAN TRULY LOVED HER.
BUT HER HUSBAND FELT THAT HAVING CHILDREN WAS THE TRUEST EXPRESSION OF LOVE...
FOR HIM, SEX WAS MERELY A MEANS TO AN END: A NECES-SARY EVIL.
BIRTH WOULD HAVE BROUGHT AN END TO HER FANTASY.

SO YOU'RE SAYING THAT THIS CHILD THAT WOULD NEVER BE BORN ALLOWED KYOUKO-SAN TO FREEZE HERSELF IN A FANTASY VERSION OF THE PAST, RIGHT?
AND AT THE SAME TIME, IT ALLOWED HER TO DENY THE TRUTH OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED.
HE MAY HAVE EVEN BEEN AVERSE TO THE IDEA OF SEX FOR ANY PURPOSE OTHER THAN REPRODUCTION.
HMM...
THAT'S WHY SHE COULDN'T SEE IT.
SHE COULDN'T ALLOW HERSELF TO SEE IT.
EXACTLY.
SHE WAS COMPLETELY IN DENIAL.
AND THERE WAS ONE THING WITH THE POWER TO DESTROY HER PRIVATE LITTLE REALITY...
MAKIO'S CORPSE.

BUT WHEN I BROUGHT HER BACK TO REALITY... HER BODY SIMPLY COULDN'T HANDLE IT.
AND SINCE SHE SPENT HER ENTIRE "PREGNANCY" CONFINED IN THAT ROOM, NO ONE EVER CHALLENGED HER BELIEF THAT SHE WAS PREGNANT.
AHH!!
SO WHAT'S THIS REALITY THAT SHE COULDN'T FACE?
YOU SAY SHE LOVED HER HUSBAND... SO WHAT DID SHE DO TO HIM?
EVEN IF I'D DONE NOTHING, SHE WOULD HAVE LASTED A FEW MORE DAYS AT BEST.
UNFORTU-NATELY, THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WAS THINKING...
SHE'S THE ONE WHO DRAGGED ME INTO THIS.
IT WAS ALL HER IDEA...
I WAS RAISED BY A COUPLE WHO OWNED A BROTHEL.
MY MOTHER DIED RIGHT AFTER I WAS BORN, AND I GUESS MY FATHER DIED TOO.
I FIRST CAME TO THE KUONJI HOUSE ABOUT TEN YEARS AGO.





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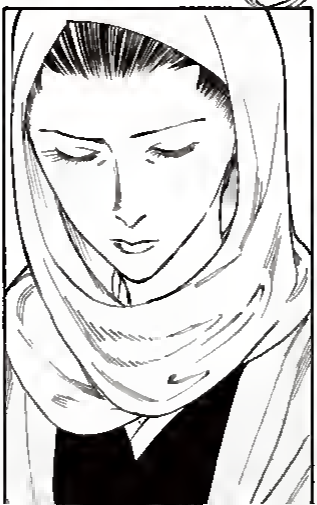
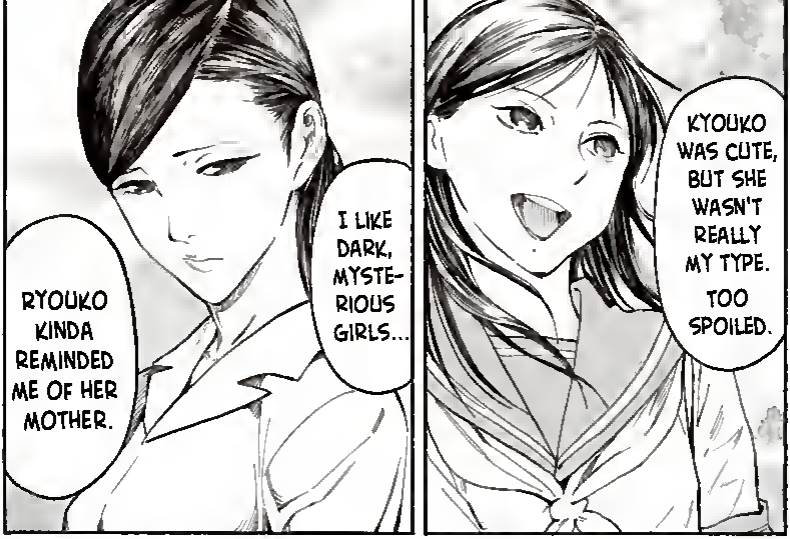


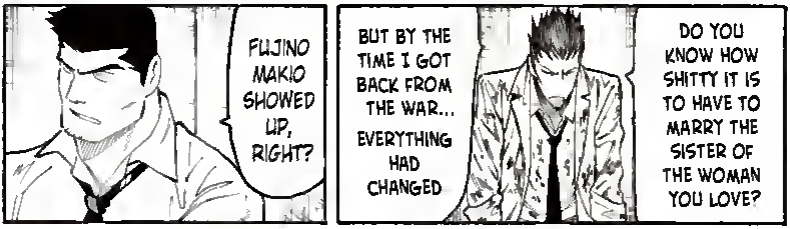
I NEVER KNEW MY REAL PARENTS...
BUT THERE WAS SOMEONE LOOKING OUT FOR ME.

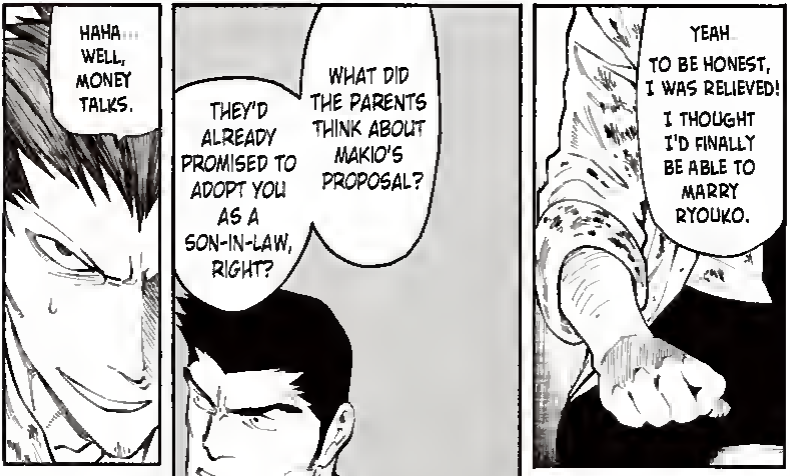
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT, TAKEO?
CREAK
IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.
SHE COMES EVERY MONTH ...
THAT WOMAN GAVE YOU MONEY, DIDN'T SHE?
AND THAT WOMAN OWNS THE HOSPITAL.
YOUR MOTHER DIED IN CHILDBIRTH BECAUSE THE HOSPITAL FUCKED UP.
...IS SHE MY REAL MOTHER?
SHE'S PAYING US TO KEEP QUIET.
DON'T BE STUPID.

I SUSPECT THAT MY MOTHER DIED DUE TO MEDICAL MAL-PRACTICE...
AND THEN MY FATHER KILLED HIMSELF.
SO THE KUONJIS WERE GIVING THEM MONEY TO RAISE YOU?
BUT WHEN THE WAR STARTED, THEY DITCHED ME AND LEFT TOWN.
SO I WENT TO THAT HOSPITAL.
THE PEOPLE WHO RAISED ME COULD SMELL MONEY, SO THEY PRETENDED I WAS A RELATIVE AND USED ME AS A CASH COW.
...I SUPPOSE THE KUONJI FAMILY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR YOU.
YOU CAN STAY HERE...
ON TWO CONDI-TIONS.

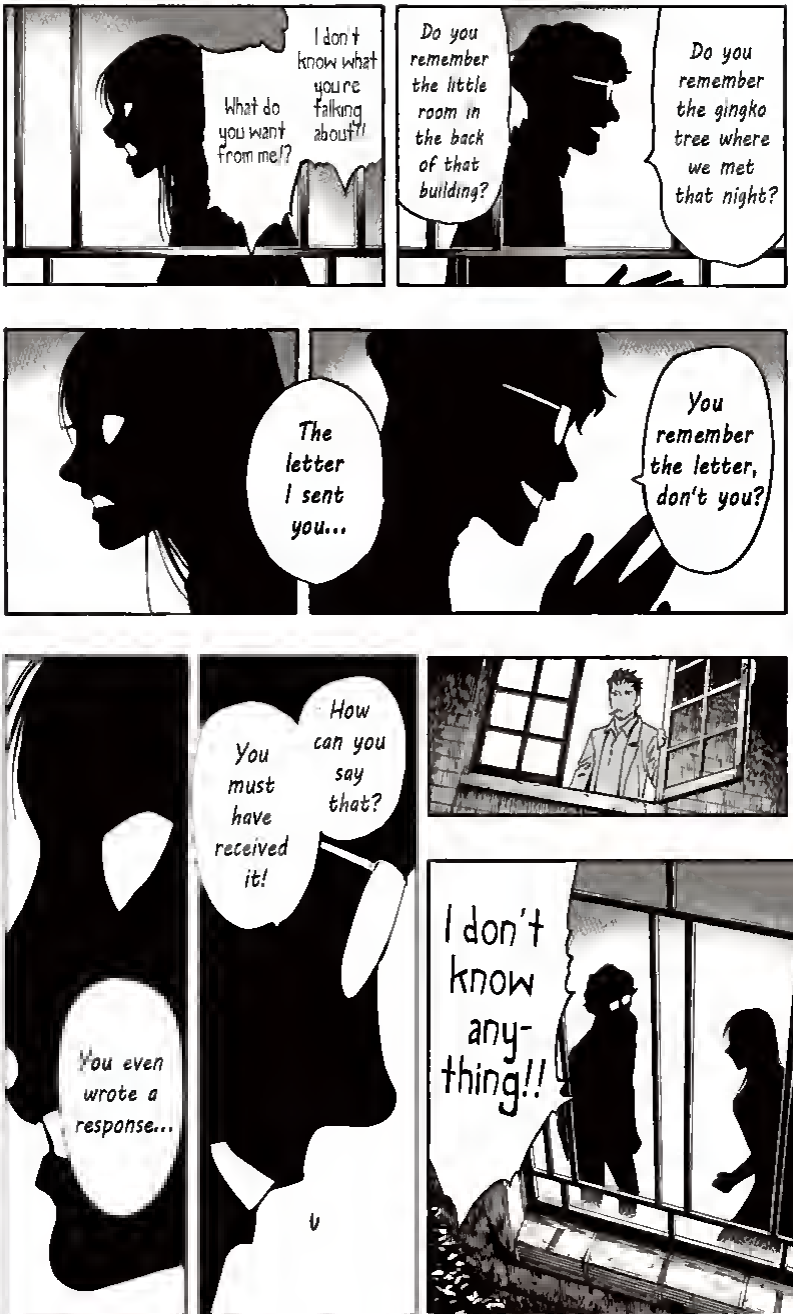
THOSE DAUGHTERS...
THEY'RE PRETTY HOT, HUH?
HA HA HA.
AND BESIDES...
I WAS DESPERATE TO GET OUT OF THAT STINKING BROTHEL.
WELL, THAT WAS FINE BY ME!
FIRST, I HAD TO PRETEND TO BE A DISTANT RELATIVE OF THE KUONJI FAMILY.
AND SECOND, I HAD TO MARRY HER DAUGHTER AND BECOME THE FAMILY HEIR.
SO YOU FELL IN LOVE WITH KYOUKO?
HELL NO!
BUT THEY SAID THAT RYOUKO COULDN'T HAVE KIDS...
SO THEY WOULDN'T LET HER GET MARRIED.
I HAD TO MARRY KYOUKO INSTEAD.
I WAS IN LOVE WITH RYOUKO!!


RYOUKO KINDA REMINDED ME OF HER MOTHER.
I LIKE DARK, MYSTERIOUS GIRLS...
KYOUKO WAS CUTE, BUT SHE WASN'T REALLY MY TYPE.
TOO SPOILED.

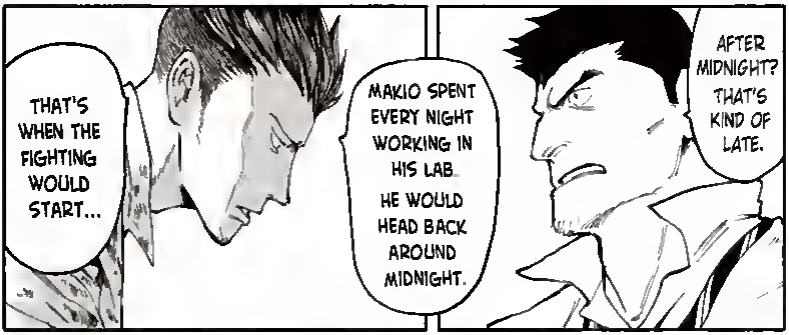

FUJINO MAKIO SHOWED UP, RIGHT?
BUT BY THE TIME I GOT BACK FROM THE WAR...
EVERYTHING HAD CHANGED
DO YOU KNOW HOW SHITTY IT IS TO HAVE TO MARRY THE SISTER OF THE WOMAN YOU LOVE?


HAHA... WELL, MONEY TALKS.
THEY'D ALREADY PROMISED TO ADOPT YOU AS A SON-IN-LAW, RIGHT?
WHAT DID THE PARENTS THINK ABOUT MAKIO'S PROPOSAL?
YEAH.
TO BE HONEST, I WAS RELIEVED!
I THOUGHT I'D FINALLY BE ABLE TO MARRY RYOUKO.

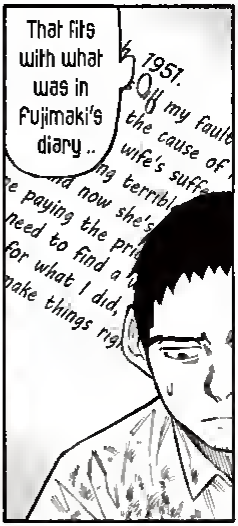
ABSO-
LUTELY
NOT!!
I WON'T
ALLOW IT!!
REST
ASSURED
THAT WE WILL
CONTINUE
TO SUPPORT
YOU.
YOU
HAVE MY
DEEPEST
APO-
LOGIES.
WHATEVER,
JUST LET
ME MARRY
RYOUKO!
KYOUKO
AND MAKIO
GOT MARRIED
AND MOVED IN
TOGETHER.
I FELL INTO
DEPRESSION
AND FAILED
MY EXAMS.
I don't
know what
you're
talking
about!
THEY'RE
GOING AT
IT AGAIN,
HUH?
AND
THEN
ONE
NIGHT...


I don't know what you're talking about!!
What do you want from me!?
Do you remember the little room in the back of that building?
Do you remember the gingko tree where we met that night?
The letter I sent you...
You remember the letter, don't you?
How can you say that?
You must have received it!
You even wrote a response...
I don't know anything!!

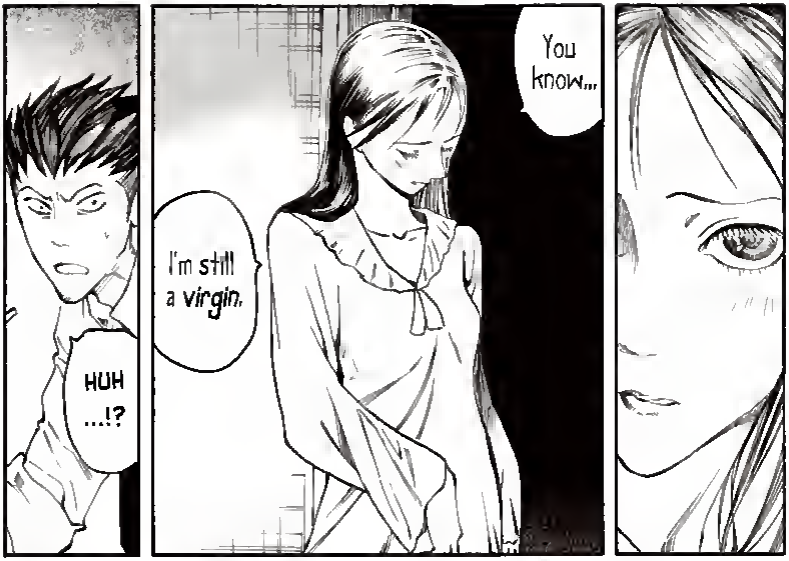
KYOUKO STARTED GETTING VIOLENT.
THAT WAS AROUND THE BEGINNING OF AUGUST.
THEY'D START FIGHTING EVERY NIGHT AFTER MIDNIGHT, AND KEEP FIGHTING UNTIL DAWN.

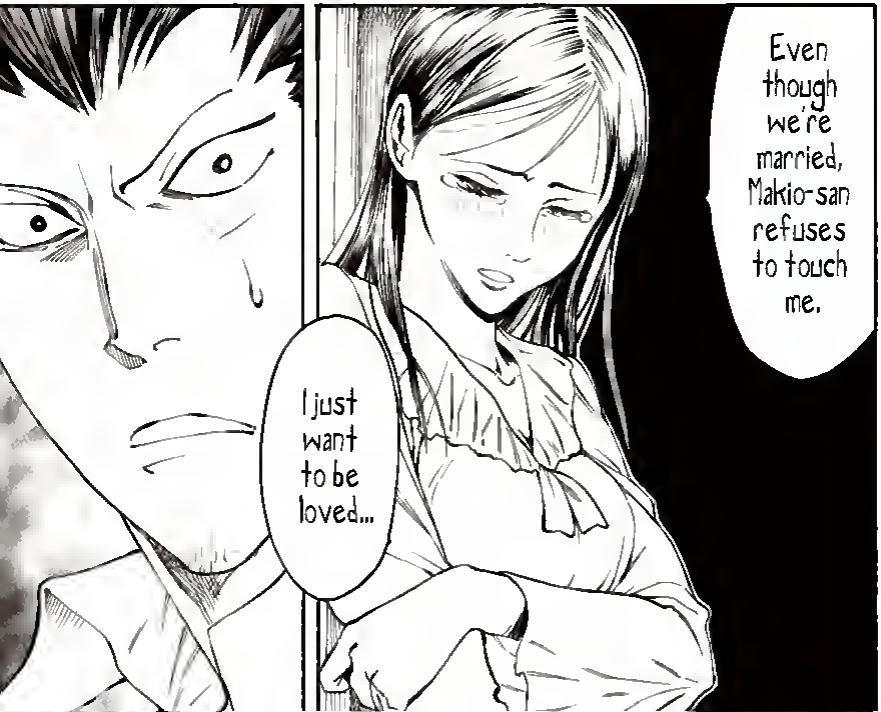

AFTER MIDNIGHT? THAT'S KIND OF LATE.
MAKIO SPENT EVERY NIGHT WORKING IN HIS LAB. HE WOULD HEAD BACK AROUND MIDNIGHT.
THAT'S WHEN THE FIGHTING WOULD START...

AND THEN, NEAR THE END OF AUGUST...
SHE SUDDENLY SHOWED UP AT MY DOOR.


That fits with what was in Fujimaki's diary..
1951.
Oh my fault
the cause of
wife's suff
ng terrib
d now she's
e paying the pri
need to find a
for what I did,
ake things ri

Our windows are so close...
You can hear everything, right?
Hey, Naitou...
You can hear us, can't you?
WHO CARES WHAT SHE THINKS!?
WHOA, WHOA, CALM DOWN!!
GLARE
.....
BLINK
HEY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
WHAT WOULD YOUR MOTHER SAY...?

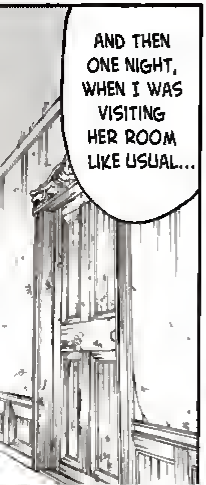

HUH ...!?
I'm still a virgin.
You know...


I just want to be loved...
Even though we're married, Makio-san refuses to touch me.

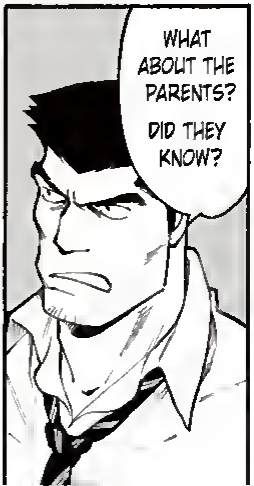
But he won't even touch me!
There's no way I could have gotten pregnant!
Right!?
According to Makio-san...
We had a child together ten years ago.
He won't stop asking me about it!
He keeps asking what happened to our baby - Did it die? Did I have an abortion?

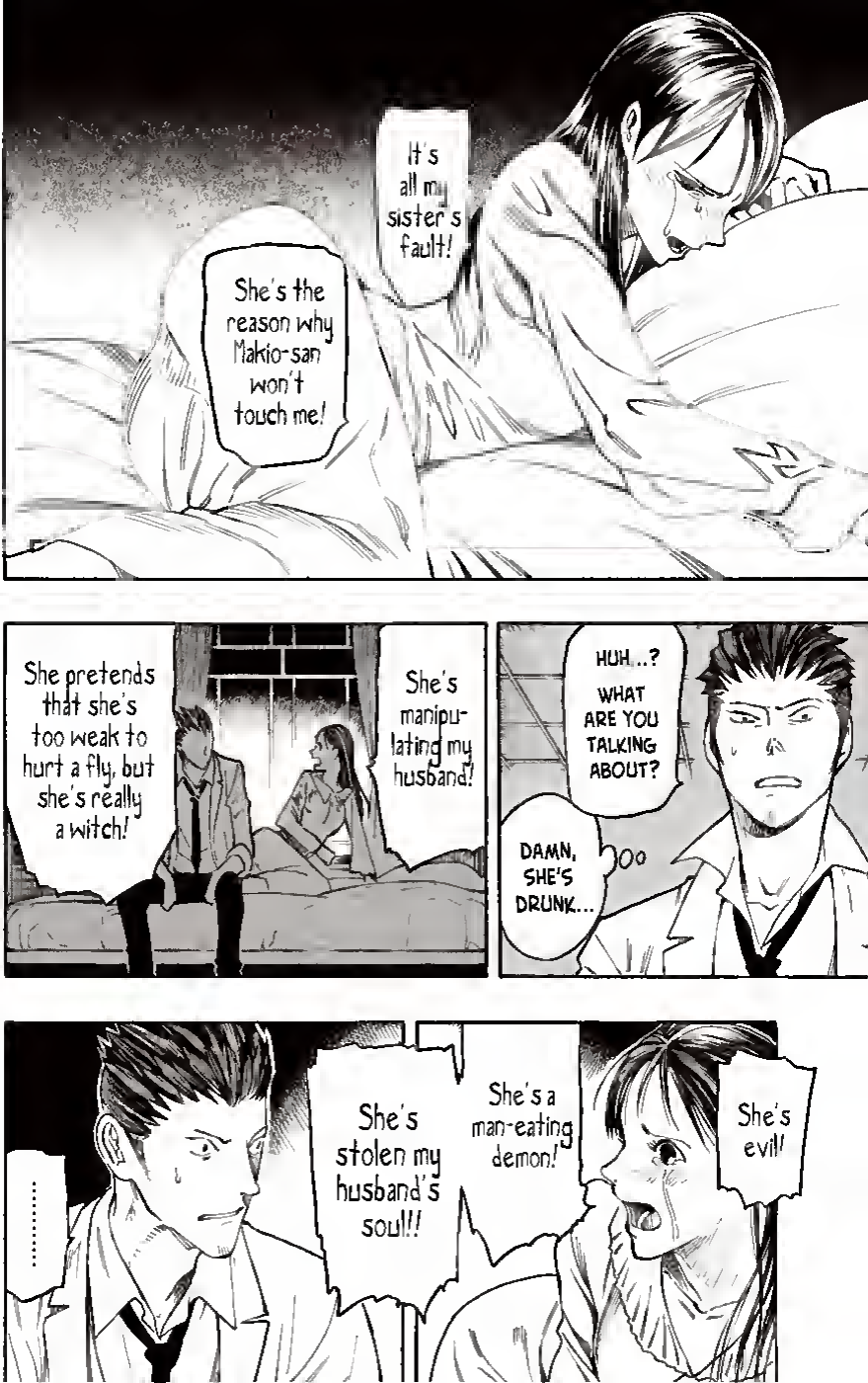
Back then, she...
Do you want to play with me?
That can't be...
.....
I know I gave Makio-sempai's letter to her back then!
She must really be delusional...
BUT HE JUST LAUGHED IT OFF AND LOOKED THE OTHER WAY.
THAT BROUGHT OUT THE WORST IN KYOUKO...
AFTER THAT, KYOUKO GOT REALLY AFFECTIONATE WITH ME.
EVEN AROUND HER HUSBAND!

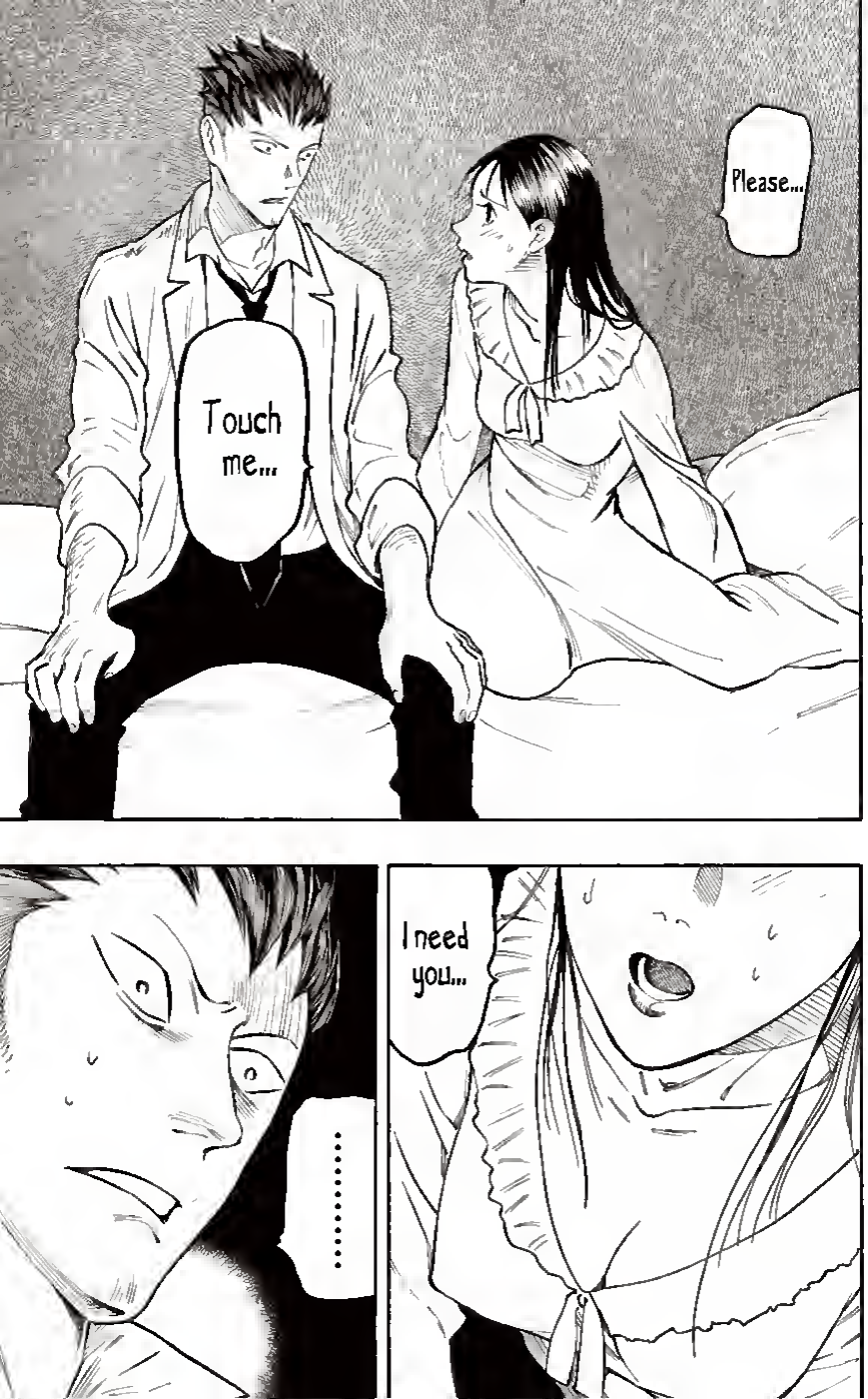
BY FALL, SHE WAS INVITING ME TO HER ROOM EVERY NIGHT.
WE'D DRINK UNTIL MAKIO FINISHED UP IN THE LAB.
HE'LL BE BACK SOON...
CREAK
.....
FLINCH

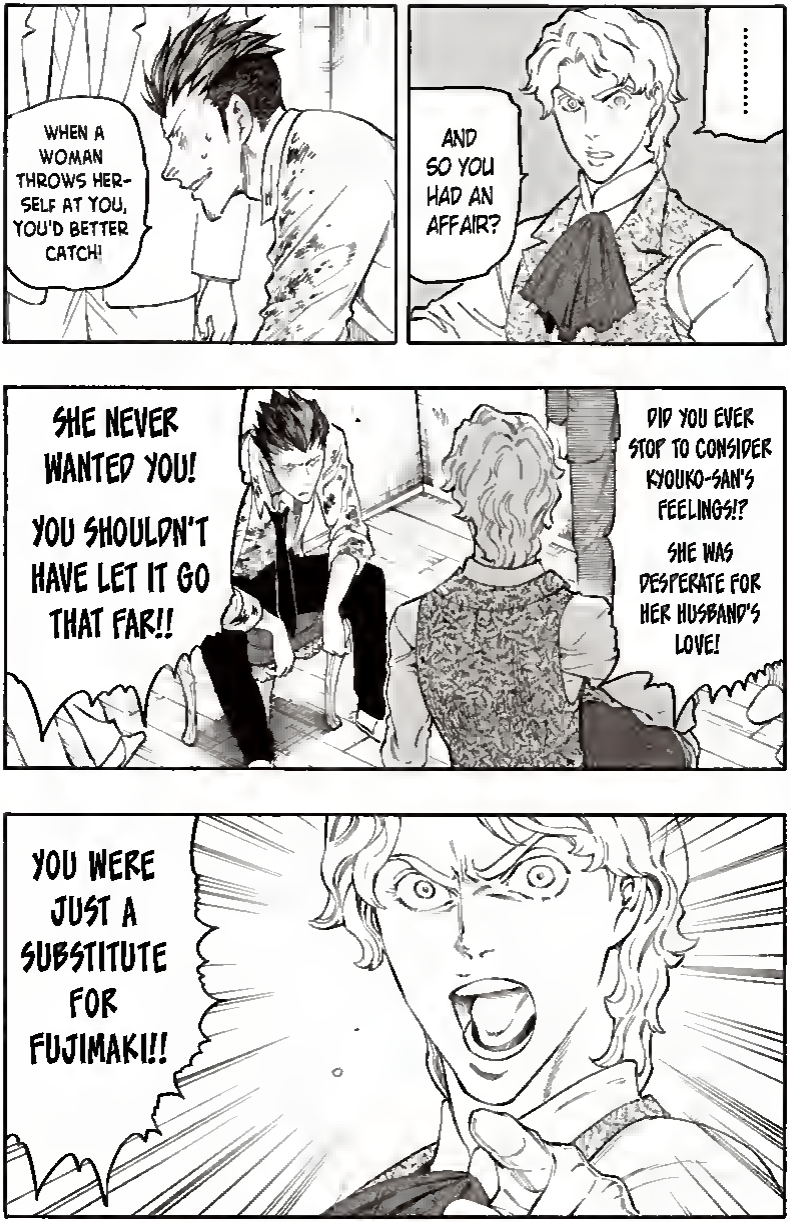

AND THEN ONE NIGHT, WHEN I WAS VISITING HER ROOM LIKE USUAL...

NOPE, KYOUKO ACTED LIKE A DEVOTED WIFE IN FRONT OF THEM.
AND MAKIO NEVER SAID A WORD.

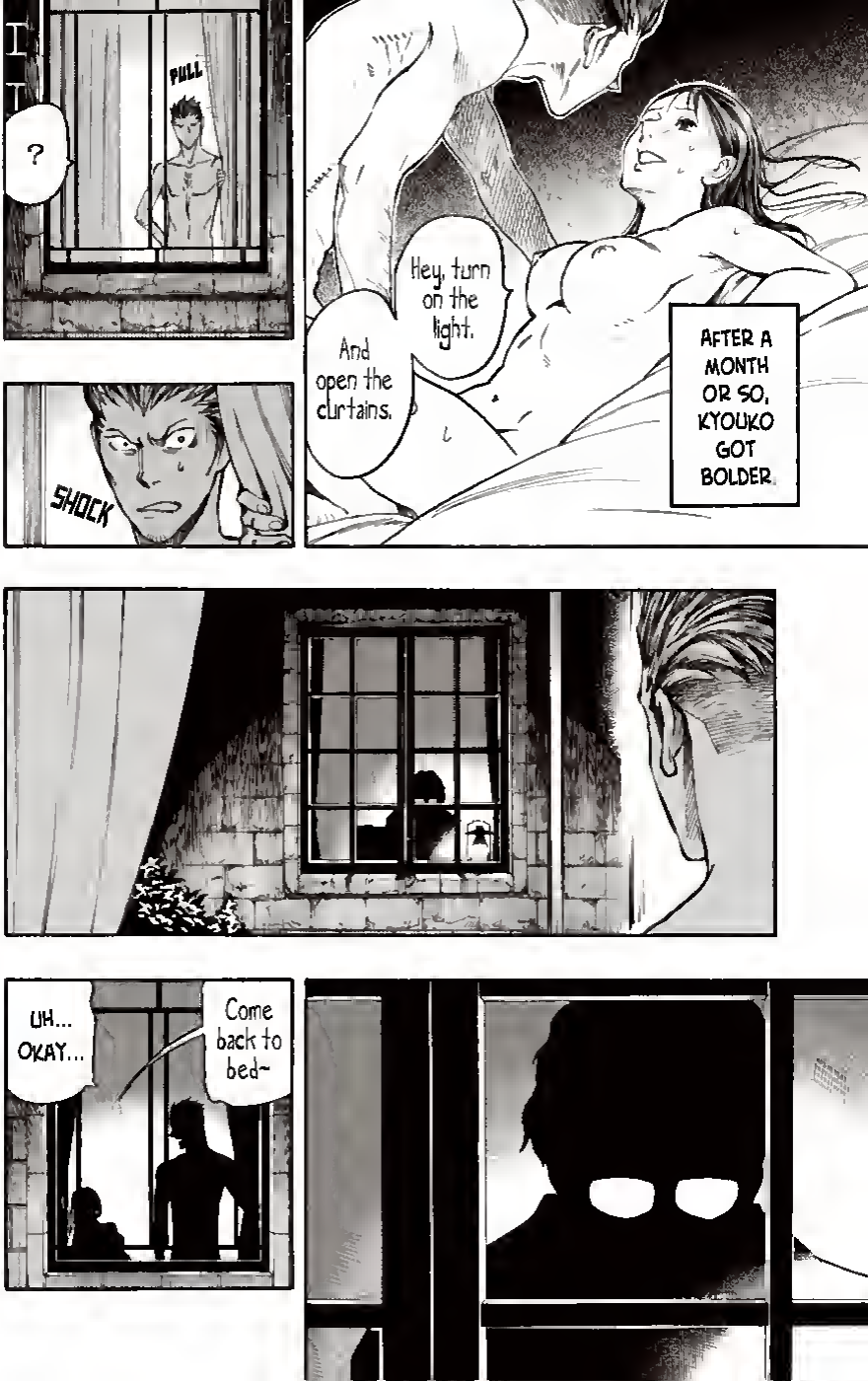

WHAT ABOUT THE PARENTS?
DID THEY KNOW?


It's all my sister's fault!
She's the reason why Makio-san won't touch me!
She pretends that she's too weak to hurt a fly, but she's really a witch!
She's manipulating my husband!
HUH...?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
DAMN, SHE'S DRUNK...
.....
She's stolen my husband's soul!!
She's a man-eating demon!
She's evil!

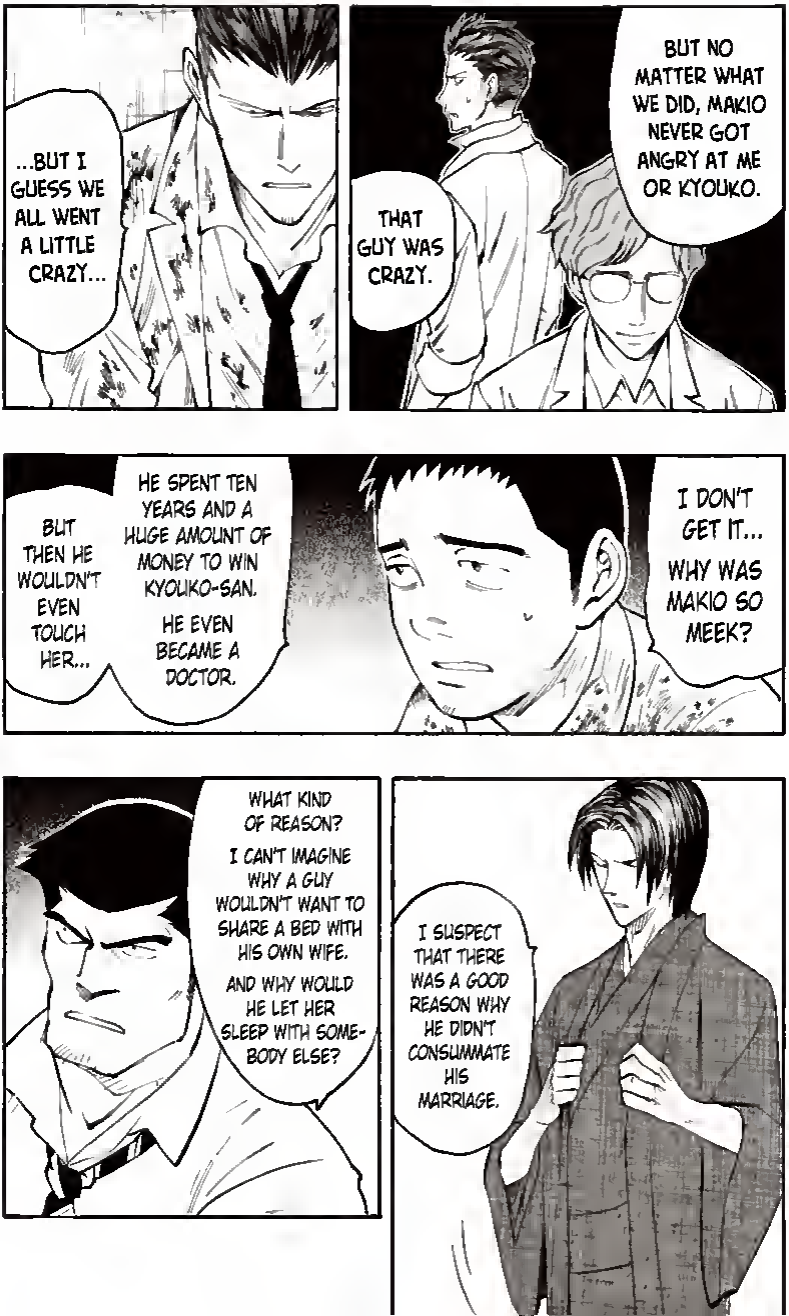

Please...
Touch me...
.....
I need you...

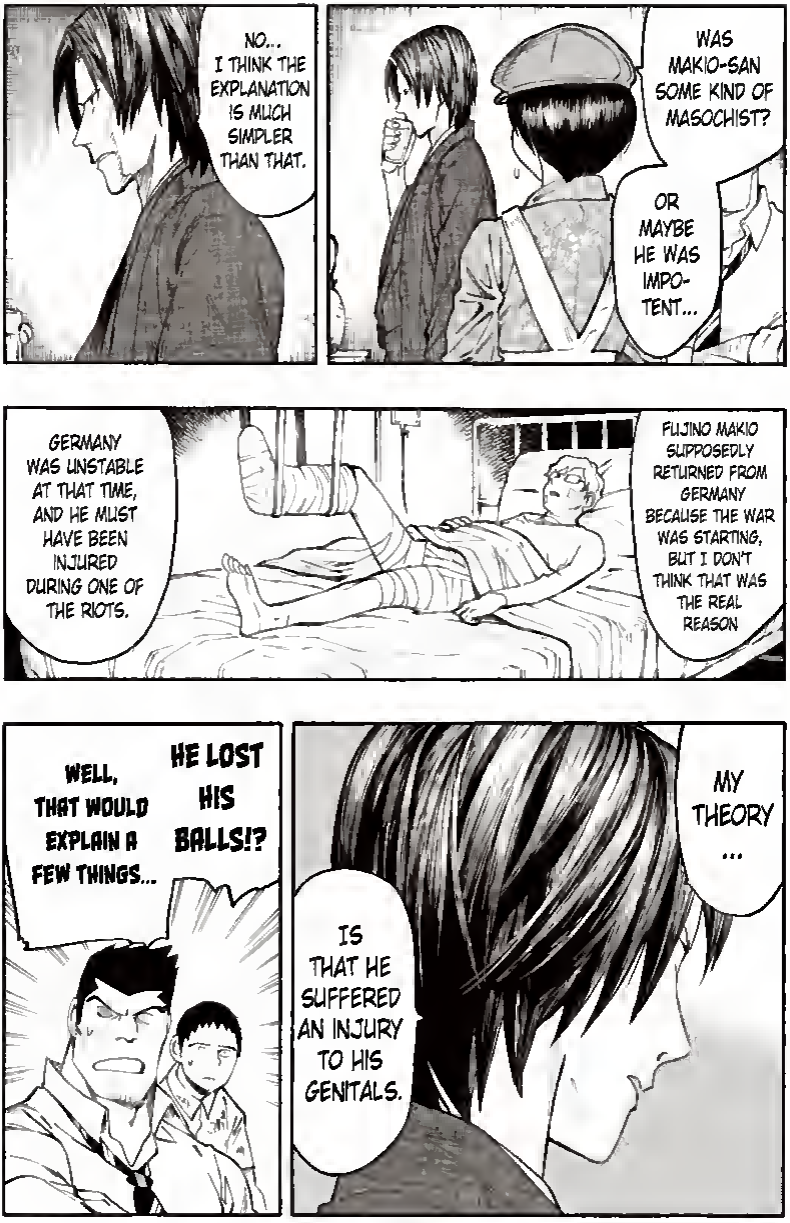

WHEN A WOMAN THROWS HERSELF AT YOU, YOU'D BETTER CATCH!
AND SO YOU HAD AN AFFAIR?
.....
SHE NEVER WANTED YOU!
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE LET IT GO THAT FAR!!
DID YOU EVER STOP TO CONSIDER KYOUKO-SAN'S FEELINGS?!?
SHE WAS DESPERATE FOR HER HUSBAND'S LOVE!
YOU WERE JUST A SUBSTITUTE FOR FUJIMAKI!!

YOU THINK I NEED A DETECTIVE TO TELL ME THAT!?
I WAS JUST USING HER AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR HER SISTER!!
.....
...YOU'RE TRASH.
HA HA HA, I MEAN, THEY'RE PRACTICALLY IDENTICAL, RIGHT?
FROM THAT POINT ON, I JUST PRETENDED SHE WAS RYOUKO AND FUCKED HER EVERY NIGHT!
ONCE SHE DISCOVERED SEX, SHE COULDN'T GET ENOUGH OF ME!
AND THE BEST PART WAS THAT HER HUSBAND COULD SEE EVERYTHING THROUGH THE WINDOW!


PULL
?
SHOCK
Hey, turn on the light.
And open the curtains.
AFTER A MONTH OR SO, KYOUKO GOT BOLDER.
UH... OKAY...
Come back to bed~

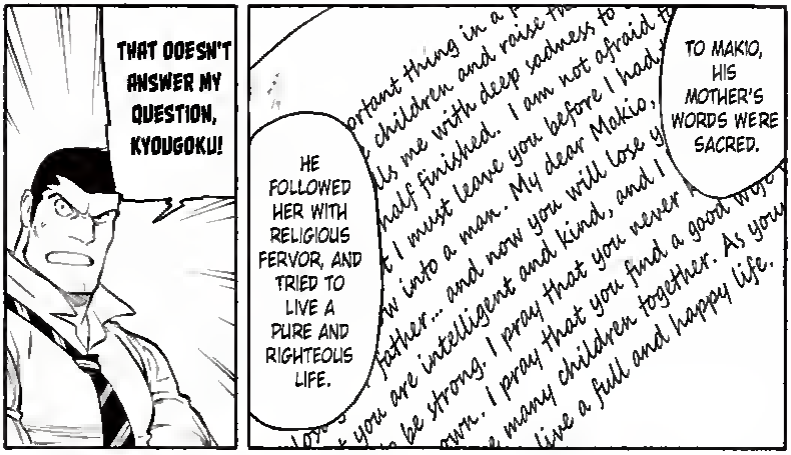
Now you can watch us every night!
Do you like what you see, Makio-san~?
Ah!
Ah!
Ah~!

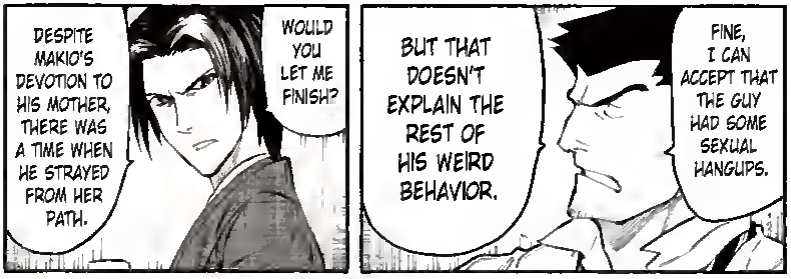

...BUT I GUESS WE ALL WENT A LITTLE CRAZY...
THAT GUY WAS CRAZY.
BUT NO MATTER WHAT WE DID, MAKIO NEVER GOT ANGRY AT ME OR KYOUKO.
BUT THEN HE WOULDN'T EVEN TOUCH HER...
HE SPENT TEN YEARS AND A HUGE AMOUNT OF MONEY TO WIN KYOUKO-SAN.
HE EVEN BECAME A DOCTOR.
I DON'T GET IT...
WHY WAS MAKIO SO MEEK?
WHAT KIND OF REASON?
I CAN'T IMAGINE WHY A GUY WOULDN'T WANT TO SHARE A BED WITH HIS OWN WIFE.
AND WHY WOULD HE LET HER SLEEP WITH SOMEBODY ELSE?
I SUSPECT THAT THERE WAS A GOOD REASON WHY HE DIDN'T CONSUMMATE HIS MARRIAGE.

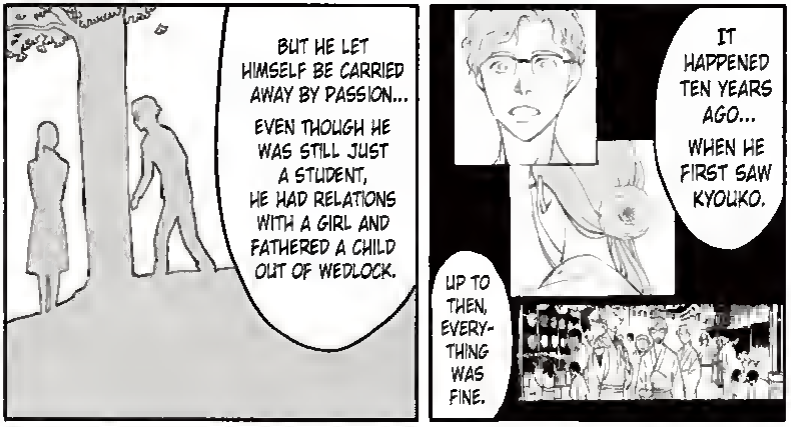

NO... I THINK THE EXPLANATION IS MUCH SIMPLER THAN THAT.
WAS MAKIO-SAN SOME KIND OF MASOCHIST?
OR MAYBE HE WAS IMPO-TENT...
GERMANY WAS UNSTABLE AT THAT TIME, AND HE MUST HAVE BEEN INJURED DURING ONE OF THE RIOTS.
FUJINO MAKIO SUPPOSEDLY RETURNED FROM GERMANY BECAUSE THE WAR WAS STARTING, BUT I DON'T THINK THAT WAS THE REAL REASON
WELL, THAT WOULD EXPLAIN A FEW THINGS...
HE LOST HIS BALLS!?
IS THAT HE SUFFERED AN INJURY TO HIS GENITALS.
MY THEORY ...

I DOUBT THAT HE WOULD HAVE SEEN IT AS DISHONEST.
RATHER, HE FELT THAT HE WAS OBLIGATED TO MARRY HER.
BUT WASN'T IT KIND OF DISHONEST FOR HIM TO MARRY KYOUKO WITHOUT TELLING HER?
AS I SAID, FUJINO MAKIO BELIEVED THAT REPRODUCTION WAS THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF HUMAN EXISTENCE.
IT'S LIKELY THAT HE WAS INFLUENCED BY HIS MOTHER.
HER FINAL NOTE IN HIS DIARY MUST HAVE HAD A PROFOUND IMPACT ON HIM
"AS A MOTHER, IT FILLS ME WITH DEEP SADNESS TO LEAVE THIS WORK ONLY HALF FINISHED."
"THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN A PERSON'S LIFE IS THAT THEY HAVE CHILDREN AND RAISE THEM WELL."

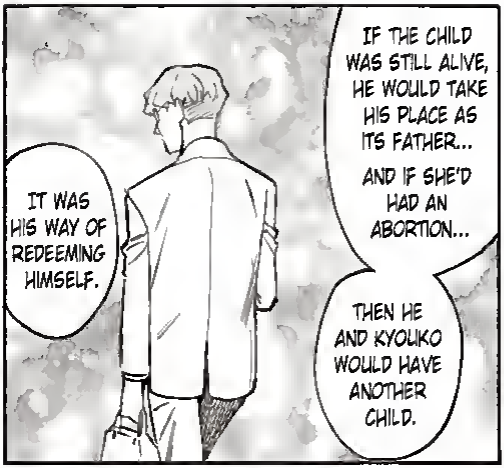
"MY DEAR MAKIO, YOU ALREADY LOST YOUR FATHER... AND NOW YOU WILL LOSE YOUR MOTHER."
"BUT YOU ARE INTELLIGENT AND KIND, AND I KNOW THAT YOU WILL GROW TO BE STRONG."
"I AM NOT AFRAID TO DIE."
"BUT I REGRET THAT I MUST LEAVE YOU BEFORE I HAVE THE CHANCE TO SEE YOU GROW INTO A MAN."
"I PRAY THAT YOU NEVER KNOW THE SADNESS THAT I HAVE KNOWN."
"AS YOUR MOTHER, I PRAY THAT YOU LIVE A FULL AND HAPPY LIFE."
"I PRAY THAT YOU FIND A GOOD WIFE WHO LOVES YOU, AND THAT YOU HAVE MANY CHILDREN TOGETHER."

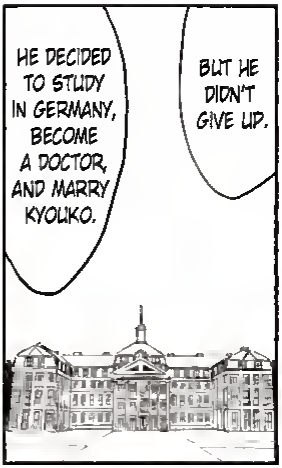

THAT DOESN'T ANSWER MY QUESTION, KYOUGOKU!
HE FOLLOWED HER WITH RELIGIOUS FERVOR, AND TRIED TO LIVE A PURE AND RIGHTEOUS LIFE.
TO MAKIO, HIS MOTHER'S WORDS WERE SACRED.

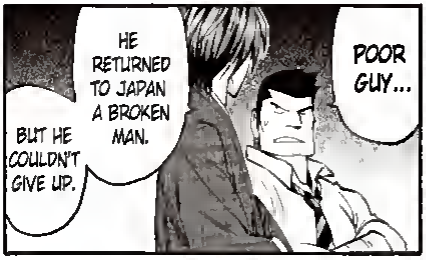

DESPITE MAKIO'S DEVOTION TO HIS MOTHER, THERE WAS A TIME WHEN HE STRAYED FROM HER PATH.
WOULD YOU LET ME FINISH?
BUT THAT DOESN'T EXPLAIN THE REST OF HIS WEIRD BEHAVIOR.
FINE, I CAN ACCEPT THAT THE GUY HAD SOME SEXUAL HANGUPS.


BUT HE LET HIMSELF BE CARRIED AWAY BY PASSION...
EVEN THOUGH HE WAS STILL JUST A STUDENT, HE HAD RELATIONS WITH A GIRL AND FATHERED A CHILD OUT OF WEDLOCK.
IT HAPPENED TEN YEARS AGO...
WHEN HE FIRST SAW KYOUKO.
UP TO THEN, EVERY-THING WAS FINE.

MAYBE IT WAS ONE OF THOSE "DELUSIONS" YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT!
BUT KYOUKO DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT A BABY!
FOR ALL YOU KNOW, HE WAS JUST IMAGINING SHIT AND WRITING IT IN HIS DIARY.
Wait...
But that's...
SO KYOUKO WAS LYING?
OR DOES SHE HAVE AMNESIA?
AND I THINK THERE WAS A CHILD.
THAT'S POSSIBLE.
BUT THE POINT IS THAT FUJIMAKI BELIEVED IT WAS TRUE.
BUT HIS MARRIAGE PROPOSAL WAS REJECTED, RIGHT?
EXACTLY.
AND SO HE TRIED TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIS MISTAKE...
NEITHER.
ANYWAY, FUJIMAKI WOULD HAVE FELT THAT CREATING A CHILD AND BEING FORCED TO ABORT IT WAS THE WORST POSSIBLE SIN.

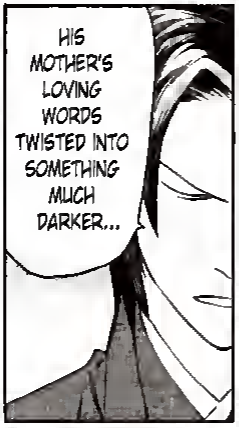

IT WAS HIS WAY OF REDEEMING HIMSELF.
IF THE CHILD WAS STILL ALIVE, HE WOULD TAKE HIS PLACE AS ITS FATHER...
AND IF SHE'D HAD AN ABORTION...
THEN HE AND KYOUKO WOULD HAVE ANOTHER CHILD.


HE DECIDED TO STUDY IN GERMANY, BECOME A DOCTOR, AND MARRY KYOUKO.
BUT HE DIDN'T GIVE UP.


BUT HE COULDN'T GIVE UP.
HE RETURNED TO JAPAN A BROKEN MAN.
POOR GUY...

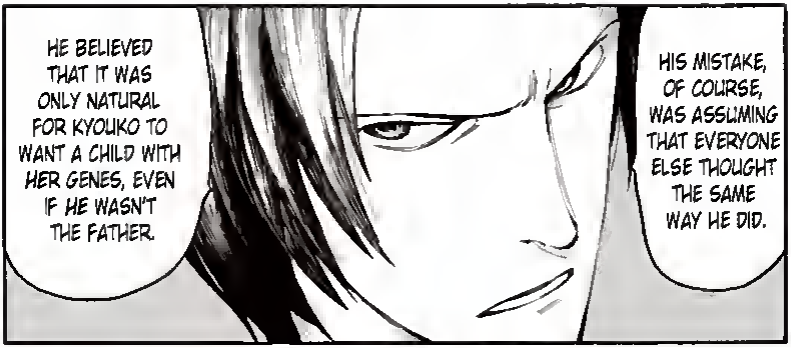
BUT UNFORTUNATELY, HE WAS INJURED AND LOST THE CAPACITY TO FATHER CHILDREN
HE LOST THE ONLY WAY OF ATONING FOR HIS MISTAKE

SO WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?


HIS MOTHER'S LOVING WORDS TWISTED INTO SOMETHING MUCH DARKER...

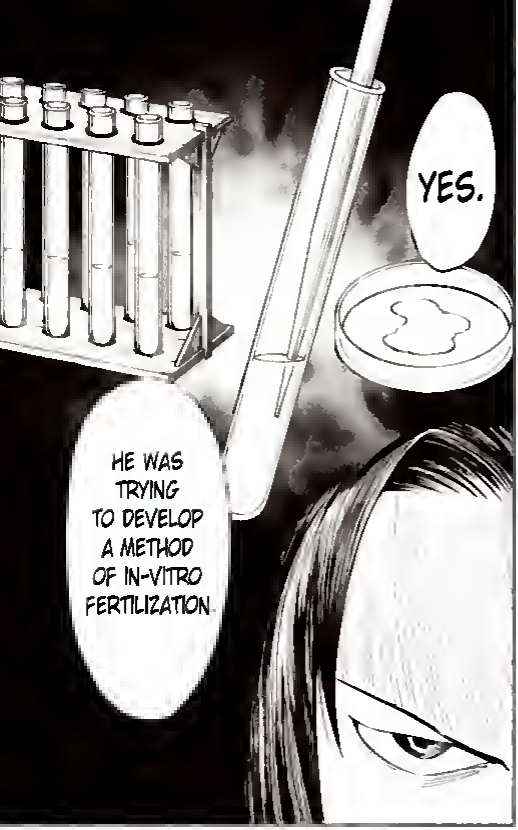
IF REPRODUCTION IS THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF ANY CREATURE'S LIFE, THEN SEX IS MERELY A WAY OF TRANSFERRING THE NECESSARY GENETIC MATERIAL.
HE BELIEVED HE COULD FIND ANOTHER WAY TO CREATE A CHILD.

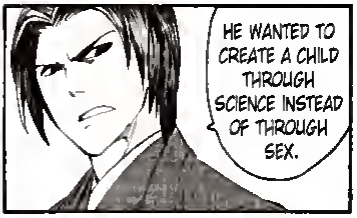
THAT'S CRAZY!!
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!!
BUT IF HE WANTED A CHILD SO BADLY, WHY DIDN'T HE JUST ADOPT ONE...?
HE WOULDN'T ACCEPT A CHILD THAT DIDN'T HAVE HIS GENES...
OR, RATHER, HIS MOTHER'S GENES.
AND HE COULDN'T IMAGINE MARRYING ANYONE OTHER THAN KYOUKO.

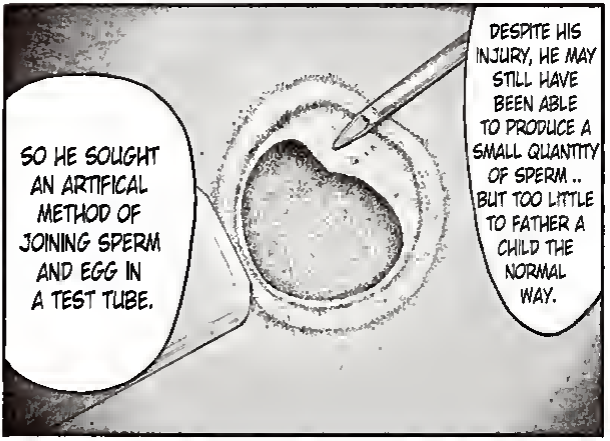

HE BELIEVED THAT IT WAS ONLY NATURAL FOR KYOUKO TO WANT A CHILD WITH HER GENES, EVEN IF HE WASN'T THE FATHER.
HIS MISTAKE, OF COURSE, WAS ASSUMING THAT EVERYONE ELSE THOUGHT THE SAME WAY HE DID.

SO IN HIS MIND, HIS WIFE'S ADULTERY WAS SIMPLY DUE TO HER DESIRE FOR A CHILD.

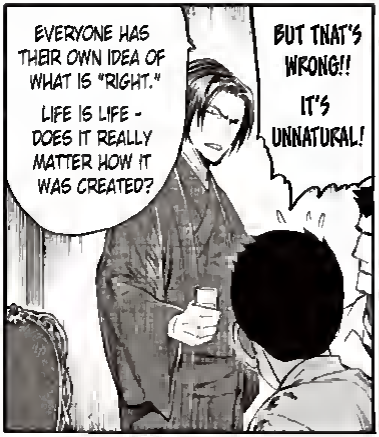
HE DEDICATED HIMSELF TO HIS RESEARCH EVERY NIGHT.
AND BECAUSE OF THAT...



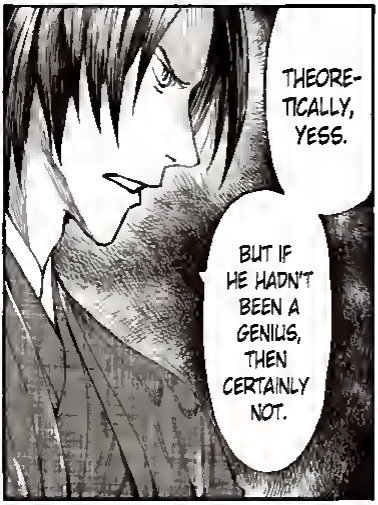



SO HE SOUGHT AN ARTIFICAL METHOD OF JOINING SPERM AND EGG IN A TEST TUBE.
DESPITE HIS INJURY, HE MAY STILL HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PRODUCE A SMALL QUANTITY OF SPERM .. BUT TOO LITTLE TO FATHER A CHILD THE NORMAL WAY.

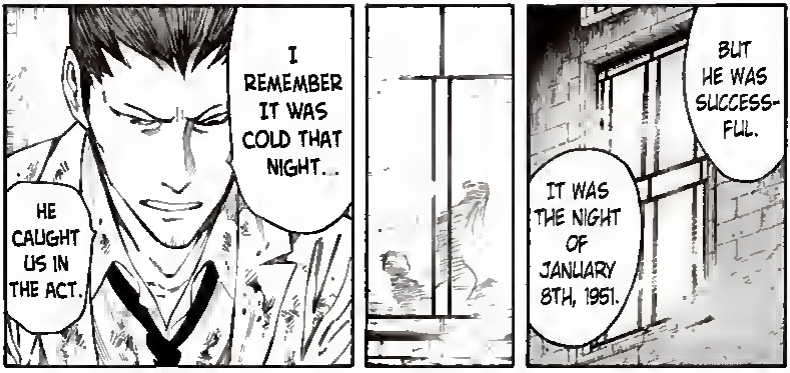
NOTE This story is set in 1952, and the first successful human use of in-vitro fertilization wasn't until 1978.


EVERYONE HAS THEIR OWN IDEA OF WHAT IS "RIGHT."
LIFE IS LIFE - DOES IT REALLY MATTER HOW IT WAS CREATED?
BUT THAT'S WRONG!!
IT'S UNNATURAL!

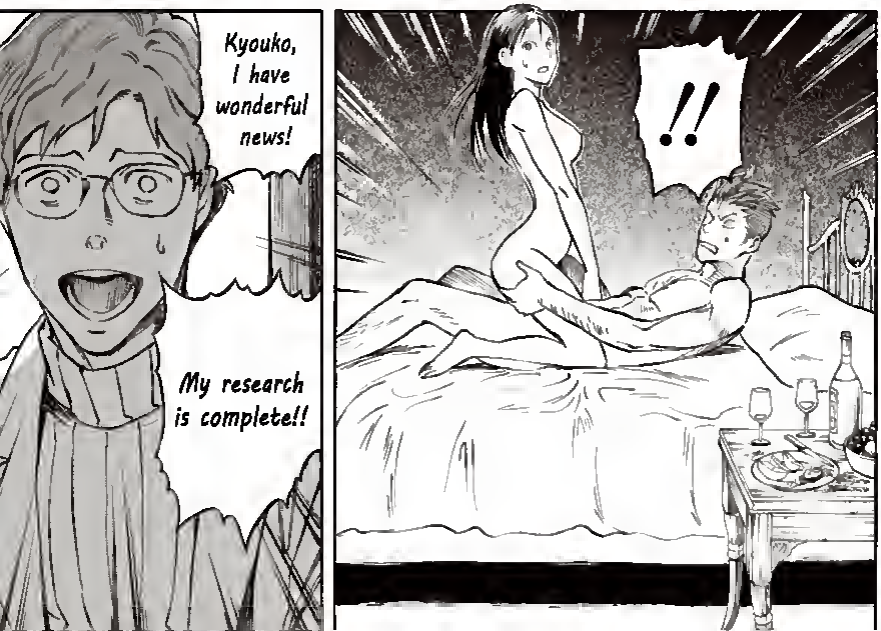
BUT IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE?

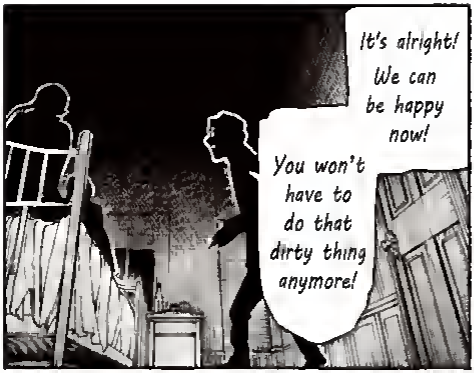

THEORE-TICALLY, YESS.
BUT IF HE HADN'T BEEN A GENIUS, THEN CERTAINLY NOT.

FUJIMAKI-SEMPAI...
FUJIMAKI-SEMPAI REALLY WAS TRYING TO MAKE A HOMUNCULUS!!

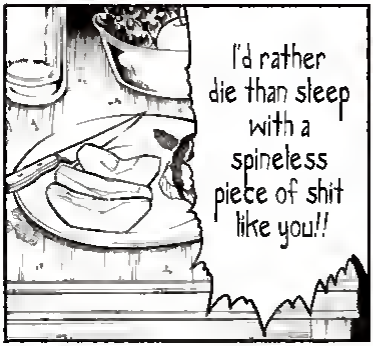

I REMEMBER IT WAS COLD THAT NIGHT...
HE CAUGHT US IN THE ACT.
IT WAS THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 8TH, 1951.
BUT HE WAS SUCCESS-FUL.

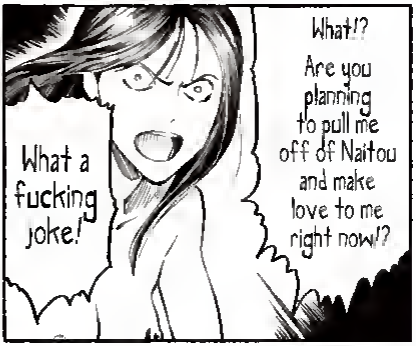
MAKIO CAME BACK A HALF HOUR EARLIER THAN USUAL, SO HE TOOK US OFF GUARD.


Kyouko, I have wonderful news!
My research is complete!!
!!


It's alright! We can be happy now!
You won't have to do that dirty thing anymore!

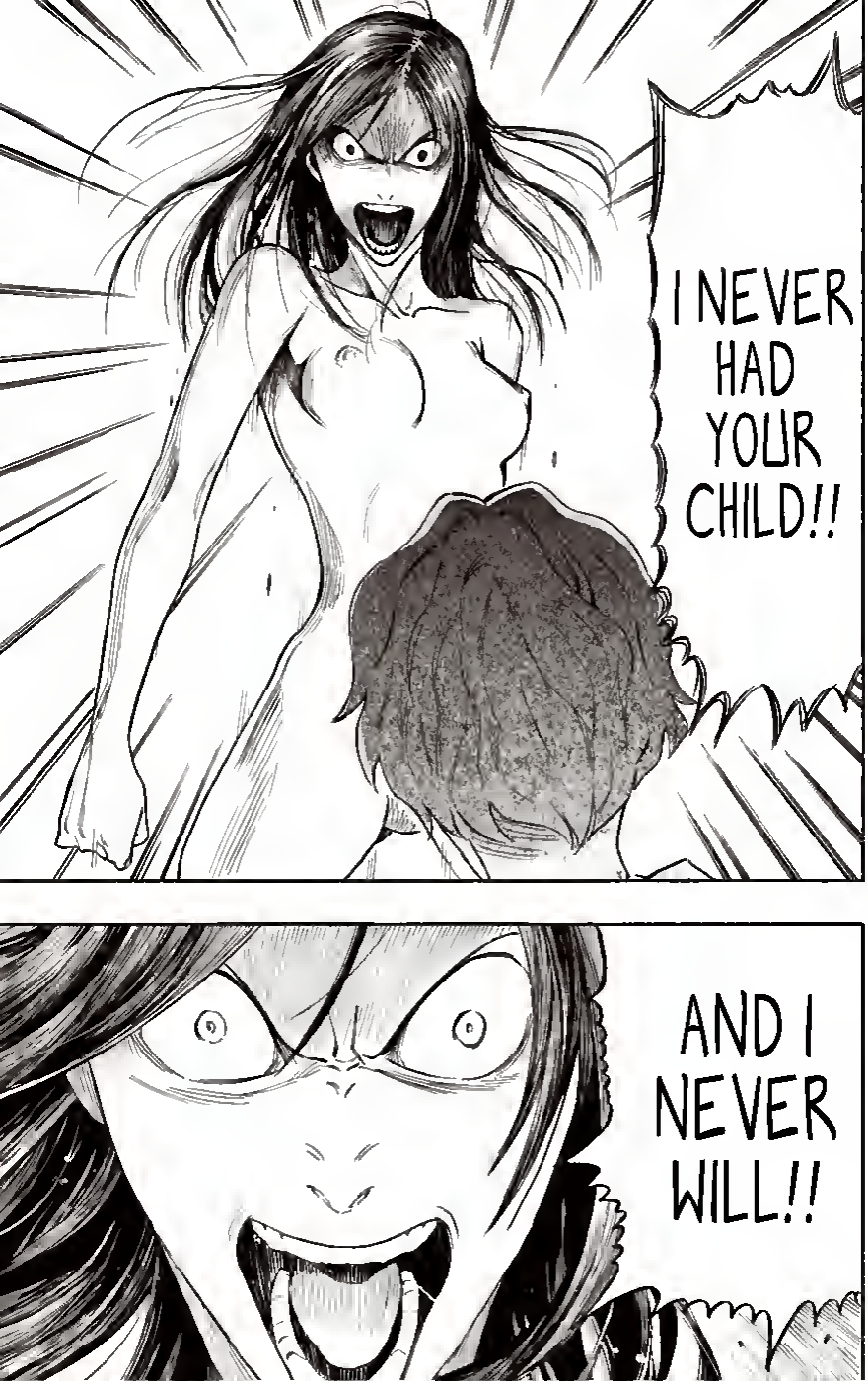
What are you talking about...?
Do you even care that I've been sleeping with another man?

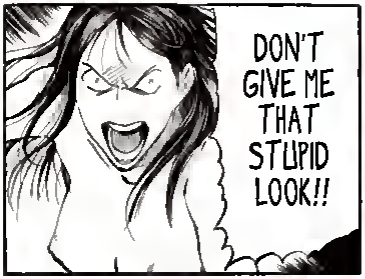

I'd rather die than sleep with a spineless piece of shit like you!!


What a fucking joke!
What!?
Are you planning to pull me off of Naitou and make love to me right now!?

This way, we can replace the one who died ten years ago...
Our child!
We can have a child without any of that unpleasant sexual intercourse now!

Please don't be angry, Kyouko...


I NEVER HAD YOUR CHILD!!
AND I NEVER WILL!!


DON'T GIVE ME THAT STUPID LOOK!!

THUD
!

Kyouko, please stop!!
Please, calm down!

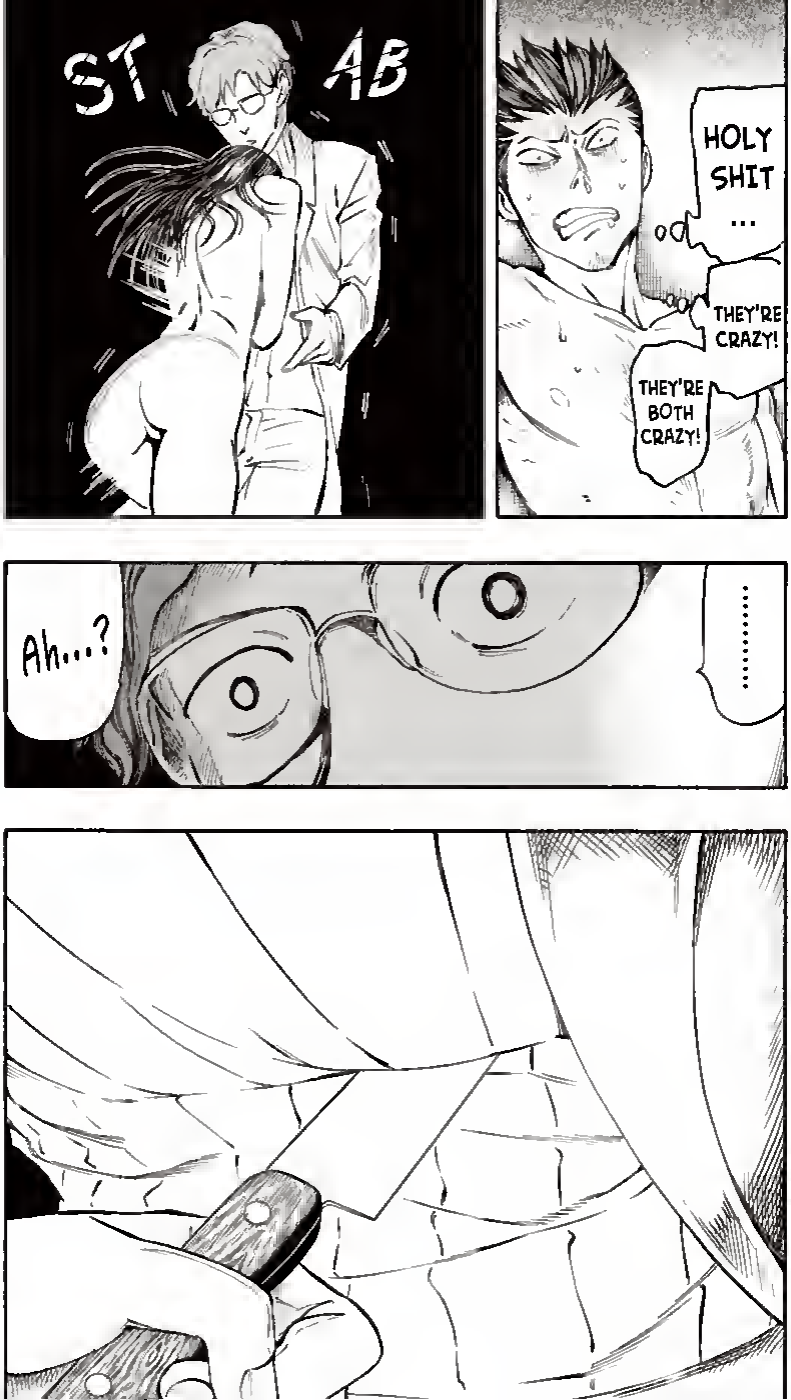
Please, just listen to me!
This is all my fault...
YOU SHOULD BE ANGRY!!
WHY AREN'T YOU ANGRY!?

SHUT UP!!
WHY DON'T YOU JUST DIE!?

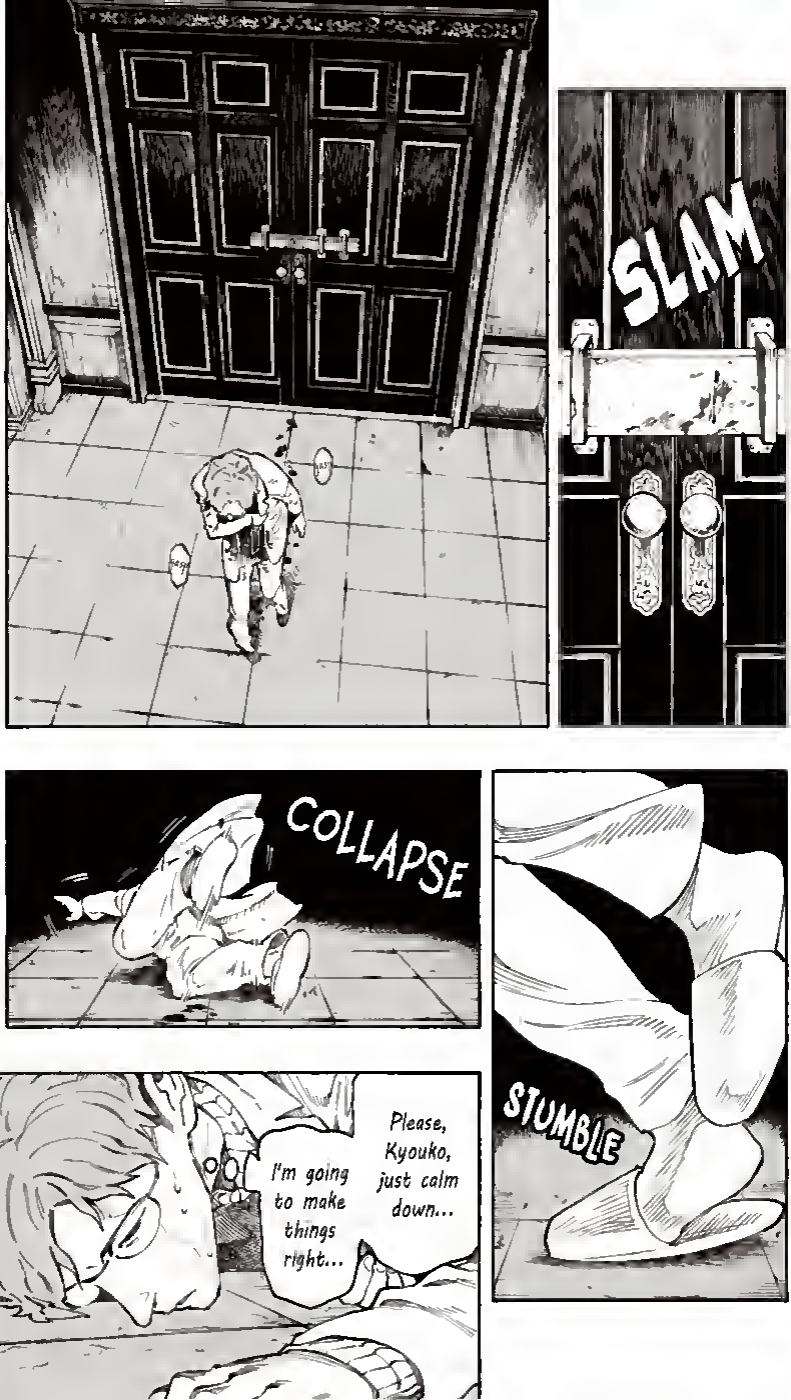
If now isn't a good time, I can come back later...

WHAT THE HELL!?
I'VE BEEN FUCKING HIS WIFE, AND HE'S THE ONE APOLO-GIZING!?
Naitou-kun, I'm so sorry about all of this.
My wife is very upset... perhaps we could talk about this later?
THUNK
OW!
GET THE HELL AWAY FROM ME, YOU PIECE OF SHIT!!
CRA
SH

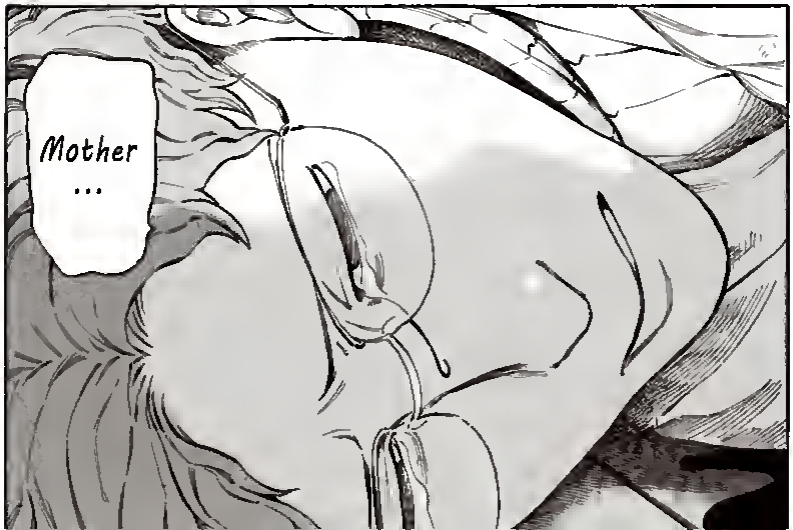
All of this is my fault...
But I'm going to make things right!
Our child will be reborn...
And you and I will finally...

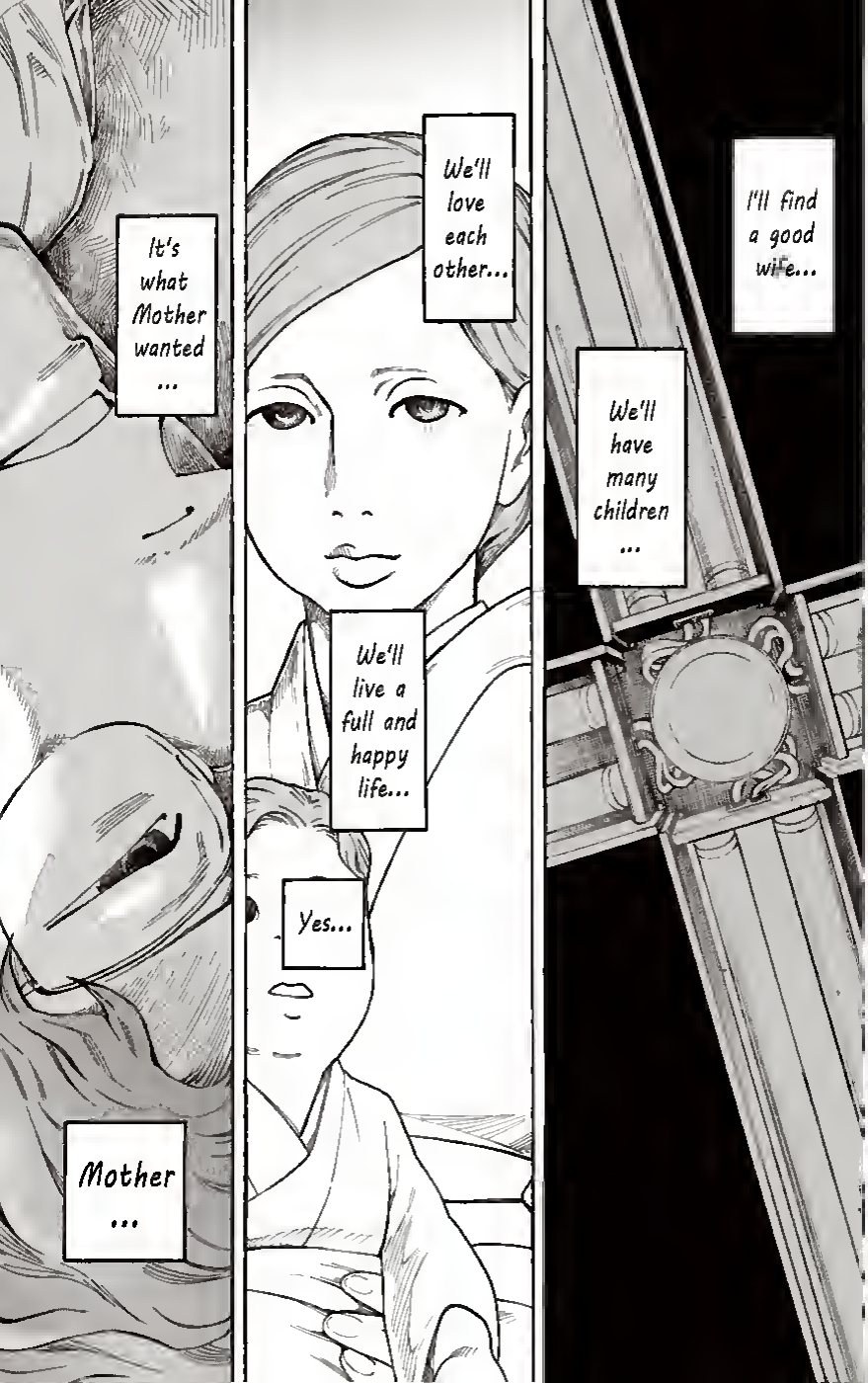

ST AB
HOLY SHIT ...
THEY'RE CRAZY!
THEY'RE BOTH CRAZY!
Ah...?
.....

Why ...?
Wh...
Why ...?
SLAM


SLAM
COLLAPSE
STUMBLE
Please, Kyouko, just calm down...
I'm going to make things right...

I have to carry out Mother's wish...
I'm losing consciousness...
No... not yet!
I can't die now!


Mother ...


I'll find a good wife...
We'll have many children ...
We'll love each other...
We'll live a full and happy life...
Yes...
It's what Mother wanted ...
Mother ...